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“THEN YOUR LIGHT WILL BREAK FORTH LIKE THE DAWN”

**Solar imagery associated with YHWH in post-exilic prophecy,
with special regard to its religious-historical background
and its significance to Hebrew biblical theology.**

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Chapter 1: Introduction

a. My thesis: vantage points and method

Through the scriptures of the Hebrew Bible many ideas and notions have been passed down to us as transfer of religious material. This religious material is attestation of the beliefs and revelations claimed by the ancient Hebrew people, residents of Israel and Judah. The material provides us with rich and multifaceted traditions, arranged and put in order by clergy and scribes of different ages. In the last two centuries these traditions have been sought out to be arranged in a modern way, into *theologies*, *sources* and various branches of modern religious studies. The different kinds of methodology available allow for an almost infinite number of approaches to any given subject. The historical-critical method has perhaps played the major part in this respect, but the recent decades of form, canon, redaction and literary criticism, gender-based methodology and even deconstructionism has seen far greater possibilities than traditional theology allowed for. Many biblical scholars have also transcended the realm of theology and peered into the landscapes of philosophy, history, literature and many other disciplines that inevitably touch upon the same subjects. The different disciplines serve each other by corroborating, adjusting or perhaps even repudiating the shared subject. To exemplify, the knowledge of Greek rhetoric has proven invaluable in academic study of the letters of Paul. Likewise, archaeology has provided us with Near Eastern epigraphy and texts that have thoroughly influenced studies of the Hebrew Bible. Biblical theology has, in my opinion, moved far past the point where inclusion of extrabiblical material in research needs questioning. Mark S. Smith, in addressing this issue, has put it elegantly: *“To enter into a discussion of God-talk in ancient Israel requires being profoundly aware of its societal and environmental contexts.”*¹ All students of old religions are in a very particular way plunging into the heart of ancient culture, as any given religion was the core of a nation's politics and the bonding agent of its people. It is only in our age that secularized notions have entered statehood, but even today faith is sought as a common denominator as people seek together for moral values and ethics in their respective societies.

Smith's quote above is rather relevant to what I will present in this dissertation. Throughout the Hebrew biblical scriptures we are presented with a multitude of

¹ Mark S. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 86.

images relating to how YHWH, god of the Israelites, is portrayed by the believing community or prophet. This very varying imagery is a result of many centuries of multifaceted tradition that have converged in the Hebrew biblical canon we know today. I will in this dissertation be concerned with one such tradition: The solar portrayal of YHWH. To narrow the dissertational range I have selected three passages in post-exilic prophecy that is the vantage point for this thesis: Isaiah 58:8, 60:1-3 and Malachi 3:20. The main questions that are asked are how the solar imagery is to be understood, and to what extent external influence played a part in its appropriation. In my undertaking to explore the solar language of the analysis texts and their Hebrew biblical background, I will attempt to find parallels in the neighboring Near Eastern world of Israel and Judah. It is my hope that such parallels (or the lack of such) will elucidate the Hebrew biblical passages and give insights that would otherwise remain obscure. There are many valid questions that surface when inquiring into this thematic. The final sentence of my thesis endeavors to capture the essence of such questions: How did solar language that seemingly relates to cultic matters come to be legitimate in a monolatrous society? Why would a text corpus that strictly condemns solar, lunar and astral worship include many examples of a solar rendering of YHWH? Would not language that closely resembled foreign creeds communicate an acceptance of syncretism? I make, of course, no claim to definite answers, but these are examples of problems addressed in asking for “the significance” of the background of solar imagery.

There are indeed many pitfalls in this venture. Firstly, I am not a history of religions scholar; neither am I an Assyriologist or Egyptologist, and hence I need be careful not to approach foreign religion and society on the same premises as Hebrew biblical theology. The threats of anachronism, overinterpretation and misconception are looming. Hence, any conclusion drawn outside of my field, Hebrew biblical theology, is (or at least *should be*) made with watchfulness, not to say humbleness. It is not an easy task to dig into the vast material of the ancient Near Eastern libraries. There are issues of quantity, there are issues of quality, and there are issues of application and comparison. Yet the most troubling part of it all is where to find a suitable vantage point. Obviously, far from all the ancient Near Eastern material is valid material concerning the analysis texts or even related thematic. There are geographical and temporal challenges that cannot simply be leapt over without questioning the content, as similar and intriguing the given connection may be.

Theologians and Bible scholars may not be historians or archaeologists, but the encounter with diachronic issues is very familiar to our academic branches as well. The risk of anachronism and other fallacies should caution any student of ancient cultures to guard his or her step. The Hebrew Bible is open to interpretation, but must be understood on its own terms, dependent on literary, geographical and temporal context. In this dissertation I seek to do so.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to dr. prof. Karl William Weyde for inspiring me and supervising me in writing this dissertation. His invaluable comments and stimulating instruction has been of tremendous importance to my work. I would also like to thank dr. prof. Corinna Körting and dr. Hanne Løland for introducing me to the exciting academic world of the Hebrew Bible. This present study, my first work of any proportion, I dedicate to my sun, my wonderful wife Iselin, to whom I am forever thankful for her חסד and שלום.

b. Scholarly contribution to the subject

Not very many scholars have directly addressed the topic of Hebrew biblical solar imagery. J. Glen Taylor is a scholar who, with his volume *Yahweh and the Sun* (1993), has made a substantial, if not unique contribution to the field. Others frequently address the issue of Hebrew biblical solar imagery in other contexts, preferably in comparative studies that seek to find origins of biblical traditions in Near Eastern sources. A noteworthy contributor to this branch is the already mentioned Mark S. Smith, with his many works on ancient Israel and the origin, convergence and clash of Canaanite and Israelite religion. To this dissertation an important article is "The Near Eastern Background of Solar Language for Yahweh" (1990), and of course sections of his book *The Memoirs of God* (2004) and other works of his. An invaluable contribution to the field is J. Glen Taylor with his book *Yahweh and the Sun* (1993). This unique work, albeit somewhat controversial at times, has proved very valuable to my understanding of "solar language". Other notable scholars, such as Zimmerli (1979), Dahood (1965-1970), von Rad (1966, 1972) and Eichrodt (1970), touch upon these issues in their commentaries on Biblical books. It is barely necessary, however, to mention "giants" such as these last magnificent scholars. John Day and his article "Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan" (1994) are indeed also worth mentioning. Regrettably, my very limited knowledge of the German language has prevented me from any in-depth surveys of German-only

authors. The one notable work that I have missed out on, and would very much have liked to work with, is H. P. Stähli's monograph *Solare Elemente im Jahweglauben des Alten Testaments* (1985). Fortunately, Taylor, Smith and Day, among many other commentators, frequently refer to this small volume.

As a student of the Hebrew Bible, I have only limited knowledge of the ancient Near Eastern cultures that are relevant to the biblical context. Many scholars have proved very valuable to my research. Regarding the Egyptian religion and history I had access to Stephen Quirkie's *The Cult of Ra* (2001) and the notable Jan Assmann's *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom* (1995). I was introduced to the Mesopotamian traditions by Thorkild Jacobsen in his thorough *The Treasures of Darkness* (1976). In the Syro-Palestinian/Canaanite regard del Olmo Lete and Watson's *Canaanite Religion according to the liturgical texts of Ugarit* (1999) proved priceless to my understanding of the ancient religion. The same goes for Mark S. Smith's and Wayne T. Pitard's "The Ugaritic Baal Cycle" (1994, 2009). Itamar Singer, renowned Hittitologist, has provided much about Hittite culture in his *Hittite Prayers* (2002). William W. Malandra's *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* (1983), Amélie Kuhrt's *The Persian Empire* (2007) and Pierre Briant's *From Cyrus to Alexander* (1999) were all stimulating volumes that contributed to my perception of Persian religion. Of course James B. Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (1969) and *Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (1969) are both works I could not have been without in referencing original texts and iconography. The mentioned Kuhrt has also provided a magnificent two-volume historiography called *The Ancient Near East* (1997) that has filled a lot of gaps in my understanding of general Near Eastern history.

Older scholarly tradition that will not be found in my bibliography, particularly the so-called *Myth and Ritual* school, gave much attention to locating Egyptian- and Mesopotamian-influenced themes in ancient Israel's cult and tradition. Particularly emphasized in solar regard was the eastern orientation of the Solomonic temple, propagated by scholars such as F. J. Hollis and S. H. Hooke (see particularly *Myth and Ritual* (ed. S. H. Hooke; London: Oxford University Press, 1933)). I have chosen not to include any of these scholars' works, though they were priceless to their time and certainly made an impact on Hebrew biblical studies to come. Their notions influenced among others Julian Morgenstern, of whom one article is cited in this thesis. Many other later and current important contributors cannot be mentioned in

this instance, but is thoroughly covered by the final bibliography.

c. Introductory clarifications

I would like to clarify some aspects of my work in this master's thesis. Firstly, I generally avoid the term "Old Testament", still most widely used by theologians of Christian traditions. I find that the term "Hebrew Bible" is much more including to the invaluable Jewish part of the scholarly community. In most cases I will use the abbreviation "HB". Even though "Hebrew" is a reference to a specific language, "HB" refers here mainly to the canon collection of the Tanakh (and, of course, its content). Further clarifications on biblical issues follow in the introduction to chapter 2.

Secondly, the area of the "ancient Near East" comprises a vast area surrounding the borders of ancient Israel, and is abbreviated here as "ANE". Not all agree on where the lines and borders apply, and no watertight description has yet determined concise coordinates. This enormous region stretches from the borders of Greece and eastward to include modern Armenia and Iran. Additionally included are Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. The ANE is a vague term as such, but the latter century and a half of various academic disciplines have established this term as more or less comprehensible; it is an area that is best limited by the apparent similarities in culture, religion and demographics. I will not go on any further in determining what constitutes the "ancient Near East" in geographical terms. It is simply a collective term that here is not meant to designate anything other than a very general area; an area that applies in almost every case mentioned in this dissertation. The context will be clear on the geography. In the introduction to chapter 3 I will introduce the selected material more thoroughly.

Thirdly, in referring to the faiths of the ancient Near East, I prefer to avoid the common label of "mythology", as it has little descriptive value. The term has a somewhat belittling ring to it, as it tend to point toward fiction and fable.² Even though many modern authors do not seem to think the phrase is problematic,³ I see it as more advantageous to employ more general terms that point towards belief in the supernatural. "Faiths", "religions" or "creeds" are good examples of this. There are enough Hegelian attempts at discerning "worn-out archaisms" from "true religion", to

² Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (trans. Willard. R. Trask; Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1963), 1.

³ Alan Dundes, ed., *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 1f.

be blunt, and I seek to avoid this tendency. The historian, theologian or scholar that does not acknowledge that the faith systems of the ancients were as real and serious as the ones in churches, synagogues, mosques and temples of today, will inevitably have a flawed understanding of their nature.

Fourthly, references to nations, areas and regions are seldom unambiguous. The best example is the reference to "Israel and Judah". As a rule of thumb, I do not refer to the Northern Kingdom as "Israel" if "Judah" does not immediately juxtapose it, or it is made explicit otherwise. I will rather use "Samaria" or simply "the Northern Kingdom". Generally, then, "Israel" refers to the borders of the united kingdom under David and Solomon. Other geographical references are made with humbleness.

Fifthly, I generally employ the standards of the *SBL Handbook of Style (SBLHS)* in citing consulted authors and works. As proposed by this extensive volume, I refrain from *ibidem* and *opere citato* references, but rather provide abbreviated citations.⁴ I have gone to lengths to ensure a stylistic consistency. Regarding references to the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, I provide the Strong's numbering in parenthesis to avoid confusion.

Finally, all Bible references, unless explicitly stated otherwise, point to the verse renderings of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. All quotes of Hebrew scripture are purely consonantal. Biblical passages in English are my own translations, unless otherwise specifically indicated by footnotes. The reader will notice that the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* translation is favored. Brackets ([]) inside quotations indicate my own additions for better sentence structure, or to shorten long passages ([...]). Brackets inside my own translations indicate words that are hard to justify by the original structure, but that contributes to a suitable, if not to say responsible English translation.

⁴ Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), 71.

d. List of abbreviations

Below follows a list of abbreviations used in the dissertation. All commentaries are found in the bibliography, along with other useful information on encyclopedias and primary texts.

ANE	The ancient Near East
ANEP	The Ancient Near Eastern East in Pictures
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament
ASV	American Standard Version
BAGD	Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker's Greek-English Lexicon
BDB	Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
COS	Context of Scripture
DDD	Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
GWN	God's Word to the Nations Translation
JPS	Jewish Publication Society Translation
JSB	The Jewish Study Bible
HB	The Hebrew Bible (or its canon)
KTU	Keilschrift Texte aus Ugarit
LXX	Septuagint
NAB	New American Bible
NAS	New American Standard Bible
NBK	Norsk Bibel 1988
N30	The 1930 translation of Norsk Bibelselskap
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NIV	New International Version
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLHS	Society of Biblical Literature's Handbook of Style.
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
Vulg.	Vulgate
WEB	World English Bible

Chapter 2: Solarized Yahwism or parallel sun cult?

As the thesis goes, this dissertation undertakes to research the potential background of post-exilic “solar imagery” associated with YHWH. I have chosen three seemingly relevant passages for extensive analysis: Isaiah 58:8, 60:1-3 and Malachi 3:20. The two first, generally considered as post-exilic, represent the last stage in the compiling of the book of Isaiah. Malachi, traditionally last of the HB prophets, is also firmly placed in the post-exilic period. This period was introduced by the sack of Babylon in 539 BCE,⁵ and when Cyrus’ famous edict was issued in 538 BCE, the exiled Israelites started returning home.⁶ This ushered in what we refer to as the Second Temple period, initiated by the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple in 516 BCE.⁷ I have limited myself to the books of the HB canon, even if the deuterocanonical books are important witnesses to this era.

The three passages were chosen due to their striking employment of terms that seem to point toward a solar understanding of YHWH’s intervention. Moreover, other accompanying terms and notions seem to correspond to each other. Phrases pertaining to healing, righteousness and the glory of YHWH appear in two or three of the passages. On this basis I have undertaken a separate analysis of each, in order to investigate whether or how they might be interlinked. If such connections can be made, I endeavor to find a concrete tendency in HB theology that accepts a solar rendering of YHWH or specific attributes of his that tie certain concepts together in such imagery.

Since, however, the texts very possibly are of the latest additions to HB canon, it would be unwise not to search older HB tradition for similar motifs. In chapter 2.b, “The sun in the Hebrew Bible”, I firstly discuss passages that display imagery corresponding to that of the analysis texts (2.b.i). Afterwards I consider passages that clearly refer to non-Yahwistic solar veneration (2.b.ii). In a third subchapter I treat personal names with elements that seemingly relate to the imagery (2.b.iii). Many passages that otherwise would be treated separately in 2.b.i are given separate expositions as excursi. Together they point to converging thematic entailing discernible tendencies or patterns in the HB canon that pertains to the solar imagery.

⁵ Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000-330 BC* (2 vols.; London: Routledge, 1995), 2:659.

⁶ Hindy Najman, “Ezra: Introduction and Annotations” in *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 1666-1687 (1666).

⁷ Najman, “Ezra,” 1666f.

The first focuses on the theme of divine intervention in the morning (2.b.iv), while the second deal with the broader tradition of YHWH's glory (2.b.v). They have the form of excursi to allow for deeper analysis of central terms that may shed light on our questions.

The analyses and walkthroughs of chapter 2 are the basis on which I will research a potential history of religions background of solar imagery in chapter 3. Of course, however, some influence from non-Israelite sources direly needs to be discussed already in this chapter. We will come across HB sources that either tolerate or disapprove of inclinations that very likely originate outside of Israelite cult and culture. Thus it is imperative to smoothen the transition between the sections. As an example, to avoid mention of the Aten hymn in the walkthrough of Ps 104 would be simply irresponsible. The contact points between Israelite and foreign culture so thoroughly attested in the HB will surface in both chapters. Chapter 2, then, peers from inside Israel and outward, while chapter 3 looks from the outside in.

The title of chapter 2 is not meant in the way that solar Yahwism excludes the influence of an external cult, or vice versa. Rather, it anticipates inquiries and explanations of the appropriation of the imagery. Was the solar imagery an old "indigenous" tradition, or was it adopted from foreign cults at a later stage? Are there parallels in the other religions of the ancient Near East, and if so, to what extent are they compatible? Are we able to distinguish something entirely unique to Israelite tradition? These and other questions follow naturally from my thesis, and will be addressed in due time.

2.a. Analyses of selected post-exilic passages

i. Isaiah 58:8

*⁸Then your light will break forth like the dawn
and your healing will be effected rapidly
and your righteousness will precede you
your rearward will be the glory of YHWH*

The book known to us as the book of Isaiah serves as the HB textbook example of redactional development. Our text, Isaiah 58:8, is generally assumed to be part of the

Trito-Isaian corpus. Traditionally attributed to the Isaiah ben Amoz found in the Proto-Isaian context (chs. 1-40),⁸ this is probably a post-exilic composition. The *sitz im leben* of the community infers that the hope of Deutero-Isaiah has come to realization in *aliyah* and restoration of the Judean state, though under Achaemenid overlordship. The authorial purposes seem to aim at encouraging faithfulness with promises of reward, restoration and salvation. These promises are precisely what v8 presents as soon to be realized if the Israelites obey the law of God.

Isa 58:8 is part of a larger pericope concretely entailing proper fasting (58:1-12). The verse lines are promises of what will happen if the people keep fast like YHWH intended to. In the preceding verses God has spoken of the current, misconstrued fast of the people. It is suggested that the house of Jacob daily seeks God (v2), and that their fast involves acts of chastisement (v5). Yet the people are not righteous as they claim to be. Their fast leads to feuding and evil, and there is trade (vv2b-4). God rhetorically asks if this is the type of fast he wants in his honor (v5), inquiring if proper fast is not synonymous to vindication of the oppressed and to nourishment of the hungry (vv6-7). The fast of the Judean people has become a prayerless, negative recognition of self-torment and feuding. "Fast" (צוים) has to the believer perhaps connoted only suffering and the absence of food, resulting in an evil, downwards spiral of evil and abuse. This stanza, then, is a promise of care for the ones keeping a "proper" fast. The proper fast will be known by its care for the poor and the combat against injustice and suffering. The reward for the keeping of appropriate fast is consistent of the presence of God himself (vv8-12) and protection for the ones in awe of his teachings and the Sabbath (vv13f).

Macro-contextual description involves complexities, as, the Trito-Isaian corpus seemingly is a multifaceted collection of independent statements. I follow Blenkinsopp in seeing Isa 58-59 as a fairly coherent statement.⁹ Chapter 58 almost wholly concerns the keeping of proper fast, while chapter 59 pertains to the wickedness of the people. Both chapters promise restoration and salvation, presupposing the community's repentance. This larger pericope contains divine speech given through the prophet. Like most of the book, it is written in I-form and concerns the behavior of the people and YHWH's exhortations to again obey his teachings. YHWH points to the many violations of his commandments and trust, and

⁸ Isa 2:1; 7:3; 13:1; 20:3; 37:2,5,6,21; 38:1,4,21; 39:3,5,8.

⁹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66* (AB 19B; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 176.

largely deals with idol-worship and inadequate cult practice. The sayings alternate between description of evil acts and the positive consequences of repenting from them. Chapter 59 continues in much the same way, but from 59:21 and throughout chapter 66 the text is interspersed with various apocalyptic themes in which the fate of Israel is almost exclusively. Concerning biblical genre for Isa 58-59, we may here speak of, in regards of the chapter as a whole: 1) prophetic speech and 2) exhortation, while specifically for v8: 3) promise of salvation. I will discuss genre further in the main analysis.

The passage in question is an isolated v8, though of course not disassociated from its context. It is treated on its own as the surrounding context is semantically removed from v8 (perhaps apart from v10b). Of course, however, the context is thematically imperative to understand v8, and will be discussed at length. I divide v8 in the cola that are given by the Masoretic text (marked by atnach and zakeph). The structure of the text is one of a double bicola containing, as we will see, a quadruple parallelism. Its demarcation is then of rhythmic as well as thematic character. I will make use of this strophe division in the main exegetical parts of this analysis:

v8aα – A promise of light

v8aβ – A promise of healing

v8bα – A promise of righteousness

v8bβ – A promise of protection

v8aα – A promise of light

The term כֵּן commences the verse in question,¹⁰ meaning "then" or some equivalent. Apart from designating time, in this case a future aspect,¹¹ it is being indicated that the following depends on the conditions given in the preceding text, as we have seen.¹²

The conditions need further comment, however. I have already provided the circumstances of the investigated verse, and would like to return to the concept of fasting. Proper fast entails religious commitment, one not overlooked in ancient Judah. It seems as if fasting was a common practice at the time, but the prophet

¹⁰ Cf. Isa 35:5,6; 58:9,14.

¹¹ BDB (227) 23.

¹² Jan L. Koole, *Isaiah III: Volume 3 / Isaiah 56-66* (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 141.

insists that its execution is flawed and misconstrued. The purpose of the pericope, as we have seen, is the exhortation to change the situation of abuse in to one of comforting the poor and needy. The complaints apparent in v3 testify to the people's lack of compassion expected from fasting. Blenkinsopp points to the hardship of the first decades of post-exilic Judean life as a background for this complaint.¹³ Parallel pericopae may be found in Zech 7 and in Job 31:13-23. Zechariah, a contemporary of the presupposed post-exilic Isaian author, describes the proper fast in somewhat similar terms.¹⁴ The passage in Job, similarly, speaks in negations of the treatment of the less fortunate. It seems as if the post-exilic era experiences a revival and consolidation of the Mosaic Law, a tendency underscored by the prevalence of Deuteronomistic teaching in this period.¹⁵ While the Pentateuch does not give any specific guidelines about fasting in general, this prophetic period finds it necessary to regulate the concept of fasting, struggling against the abusive possibilities of an act otherwise considered constructive and noble. We may follow this theme well beyond Isaiah's time, as even Jesus addresses the incorrect keeping of fast. He refers to the hypocritical act of making one's undernourishment apparent while fasting. Instead he encourages the followers to keep their chin and spirits up so that God will reward them.¹⁶

We already assume that v8 introduces some kind of answer to the charges brought up in vv1-7. Considering what we now know of the conditions, it is reasonable to infer that this "answer" serves as a solution (in terms of reward) to the problem represented by the fasting issues.

Light, אור, is, perhaps not surprisingly, a positively connoted phenomenon also to the context of Hebrew Biblical times. There is mention of light in situations where its setting is clearly figurative, or literal cases where e.g. the sun- or moonlight is described by their radiance. Here in our context we deal with a noun with a masculine pronominal suffix of the 2nd person singular. Perhaps, then, there is something unsuspected about the light. Would one not expect it to be the light of YHWH or some celestial body, instead of the reader/listener? In v8 we must presuppose that the light in question, the main subject of the sentence, is the grammatical property of

¹³ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 178.

¹⁴ An important divergence from Isaiah is the lacking of a reward like the one we are investigating. The people are criticized for inadequately keeping the fast while in captivity (Zech 7:5f), and are unadverted for their lack of concern for the widows and the fatherless (7:10).

¹⁵ Exod 22:22ff; Deut 10:18; 24:19ff; 27:19.

¹⁶ Matt 6:16-18.

the believer. Further it needs be mentioned that it is not any other “light”, but it has the qualities of “break[ing] forth like the dawn (שֶׁחֶר)”. The word for “dawn” occurs in some 23 HB passages. Sometimes it appears as the literal sunrise and other times in a figurative sense. In this passage we are certain that the light is tied to solar proportions, as it is likened to the sun dawning.

But what does it mean, then, that אֵרֶךְ will “break forth like the dawn”? The Book of Job employs the noun as an image connoting something positive. 22:28 presupposes the shedding of light on the roads in front of the believer, in the same way that it in 30:26 is put parallel to success and happiness.¹⁷ Because of these Joban instances, Westermann suggests that the promise of vv8-9 originally was given to an individual, but later came to be seen as one of collective significance.¹⁸ Either way the context is that of Israel's appropriation and abuse of the concept of fast.

The most important parallel to our verse is, however, the one from within the same corpus: Isaiah 60:1-3. Contained therein is another (or perhaps a restated) promise of divine intervention, unique in its vivid solar imagery. The connection between Isa 58 and 60 seems undeniable also considering the phrasing of Isa 59:19 as a transitory bridge between the two. In connection with the relation to 60:1, Blenkinsopp adduces that usage of light imagery serves as “the consummation, the fulfillment of the people’s aspirations”.¹⁹ Undoubtedly, 58:8 applies a kind of light imagery that by itself may be of very significant proportions. It is, however, noteworthy when 60:1 makes use of the same, yet quite enhanced kind of imagery. Seen in the light of 60:1, then, 58:8 (along with 58:10) provides fairly unique wording as to description of salvific interference. The same tendency is present in Mal 3:20, where the sun itself is directly mentioned. Here the sun is even said to be one of righteousness, endowed with healing in its appendages or wings. Three valid points of contact between the verses exist, and this probably attests to a specific development of solar imagery of the post-exilic period. What the reason for this might be is a central question in this dissertation. Among the possible solutions are contact points with foreign cults. In this post-exilic period we would anticipate Babylonian or Persian influence, but the Israelites had strong relations to Egypt and its other

¹⁷ 22:28: (קִיּוֹם) – one’s actions will be *established*; 30:26: (טוֹב) – *happiness* or *goodness* in general.

¹⁸ Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (trans. David M. G. Stalker; London: SCM Press, 1969), 338.

¹⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 180.

neighbors as well. This will be subject to greater discussion later in the dissertation.

The verbal root of אור we know from e.g. the Aaronic blessing of Num 6:24-27. Since the word in most situations is associated with luck and prosperity, we will have to assume that this is the focal point in this context as well. Logically one may assert that where there is light, there is eyesight and thereby predisposition for action. In darkness there is hardship and difficulty acting. Darkness should be regarded as a chaotic force making life difficult, but with this אור one will be able to confront one's hardship. Koole points out that משפת and צדק (see below) exist where light is manifest. This, in accordance with Isa 59:9, points back to 58:2, where משפת and צדק were idealized.²⁰ The noun is present in 58:10 and again in 60:1, both in the same kind of situation and as subjects like here. They all point towards the promise of "your light" being at hand. The root is very frequent in the book of Isaiah, chiefly in the younger parts. Surely, however, it is in the closest context that we find safe parallels to the noun in question. 58:10b corresponds and confirms to a great degree v8a: "Your light will dawn in the darkness; and your gloom will be like noon"²¹. This parallel bicolon is the result of the preceding colon, wherein the believer is exhorted to meet the needs of the disadvantaged. In the same way the despairing 59:9 seeks light only to have darkness and gloom, parallel to the lacking of משפת and צדק.

As we will see, one has to, in spite of the pronominal suffix, assume that it is the salvific action and presence of YHWH that constitutes the light of the believer. Thus there is congruity with the rest of the chapter in its mention of divine intervention. YHWH himself will answer (v9), take the lead and sate (v11), and it seems improbable that "your light" would refer to someone else's light than YHWH's. That the light is allotted the recipient seems to be a literary means of underscoring the support of YHWH. It is presupposed that YHWH will shine his light for the believer, yet it is up to this believer and his or hers actions whether YHWH will enact this support of shining. Here the promise of divine intervention corresponds to the kind of deliverance the faithful is expected to enact towards the poor and needy. The complaint of v3 meets its solution in v8: The people have wished for YHWH's intervention and had thought they deserved it in their fasting. But they have failed in their fast. The intervention they wish for will be effectuated as soon as they start

²⁰ Koole, *Isaiah III*, 141.

²¹ Here indebted to the translation of John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 500.

practicing unto others the benevolence they themselves expect.

v8aβ – A promise of healing (ארוכה תך)

Perhaps the word is meant to form some kind of rhyme or pun with the preceding, similar sounding ארוך? The term in use here is only attested six times in the HB, and refers mainly to healing.²² This new promise states that the healing will not remain absent, but effected hastily. The speed is indicated by the feminine form מתרה, functioning here as a time adverb for the verbal תצמח. According to Blenkinsopp the general meaning of the term, to "shoot forth" or "sprout up", is meant to create an image of a new layer of skin forming atop a wound.²³ Koole maintains that this portrayal necessarily employs a supernatural kind of speed, since ארוכה normally is assisted by the verb אלא.²⁴ With only six cases in the HB, perhaps little emphasis should be put on statistics.

We need to stop and consider this word, as the thought-provoking imagery is parallel to the other cola. As a fourfold divine promise, comparison between the promise sequences will prove fruitful. Two of the mentioned six references of the word are post-exilic references to the restoration of the city walls (Neh 4:1; 2 Chr 24:13).²⁵ Apart from our verse, then, three cases in Jeremiah (8:22; 30:17; 33:6) speak of the healing of the people. In Jer 8:22 it stands parallel to רפא, a word more commonly employed regarding healing. Either way we here deal with a kind of imagery pertaining to the human body. It seems as if the ארוכה may be done to both body and structure alike. So the people and the walls of Jerusalem alike may experience a sort of restoration likened to the healing of skin and flesh. It should be noted that the theme of rebuilding walls is referenced in v12, a not impossible connection. Smith argues that the healing wound in v8aβ "evokes imagery of natural growth", and ties it to תצמח as cognate noun to the Hebrew royal "shoot" (צמח).²⁶ Ingeniously, he has observed that this connection is readily available also in the royally significant 2 Sam 23:3-4 and Ps 72:5-6 (see chapter 2.b.i).²⁷ The connection

²² More specifically, to scar tissue or new skin growing where wounds have been, BDB (724) 74.

²³ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 175.

²⁴ Koole, *Isaiah III*, 141; cf. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 504; the opposing Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 338.

²⁵ JPS translation of Neh 4:1: "...healing had come to the walls of Jerusalem..." (my emphasis).

²⁶ Mark S. Smith. "The Near Eastern Background of Solar Language for Yahweh," *JBL* 109/1 (1990): 29-39. 37.

²⁷ Smith, "The Near Eastern Background," 37.

is somewhat vague, admittedly, but if Smith is right, this might shed light on how the monarchic thoughts were transmitted in post-exilic times when there was no king. It is in relation to healing and the prospective royal associations that this verse is pertinent in comparison to Mal 3:20, but we will leave that discussion for later. Regarding v8aβ, however, I am inclined to believe that here is seen a consciously rephrased notion that originally bore monarchic reverberations, but now instead focus on YHWH's saving acts.

For the same reasons as for the previous colon we assume that it is YHWH that is the donor or catalyst for healing or restoration. This view may also be found in Jer 30:17 and 33:6. The promise expands now from concerning light (or, as we have seen, the notion of joy or success) to also include healing. The thought of healing and grace from YHWH should be considered parallel to the kind of grace the believer is expected to pay forward to the needy of the community. This divine beneficence, which only YHWH may provide, is nevertheless unique. It has already been referred to the happiness found in the abstract, figurative light. Now the blessings become concrete and readily available: YHWH promises healing for the recipient. Not only will wounds grow, but they will do so speedily. The intensifying in מִהֲרָה is documented in this way elsewhere²⁸ as well: the verbal action will be performed quickly.

v8ba – A promise of righteousness (צִדִּיק)

Theologically this word plays a major role, overrepresented as it is in the younger part of HB canon. The term is found in a range of pericopae, especially in P- and D-influenced texts, not to mention the wisdom literature. The root is extensively witnessed be it nouns, verbs or adjectival forms. The meaning of the root and its cognates are manifold and complex, yet it is very often translated with “righteousness” as a general term. The word potentially moves in many directions, whereas most are related to the concept of righteousness. Often the concept is associated with justice and juridical language, both divine and human; both government and God might act as keepers or donors of צִדִּיק.²⁹ A connection to covenantal faithfulness and moral behavior in general may be detected. An important aspect of it lies in the concept of salvation and righteousness before God.³⁰ In 58:8,

²⁸ Num 17:11; Deut 11:17; Josh 8:19; Jer 27:16 etc.

²⁹ Isa 32:1; 58:2.

³⁰ BDB (6659, 6662-6664, 6666) 841-843.

Watts chooses to translate it to “legitimacy”, and ties the promise of v8aβ to Artaxerxes or Darius.³¹ צדק, then, is necessary for the ruler to be faithful to the people and to God. Watts’ royal Persian connections might seem somewhat forced, and is probably an exaggerated result of the common (though correct) perception of (צדק and צדקה) as being administered by royalty and rulers. Relevant biblical passages pertaining to this are plentiful.³² In this context, however, little suggests that the Persian kings are involved.

It would be fruitful, like above, to consider v2 regarding the righteousness. A crucial part of the charges God brings is that the Judean people are *like* a nation behaving correctly, implying they are not. The article כ discredits the credibility of the believing community; their own commitment was not up to par with what they expected from YHWH. In addition to צדק, the twin concept משפּת is employed here (cf. Ps 72:1f). The believing community in their complaints never thought *their* righteousness was a problem. They were asking for God to intervene, when in reality their lack of צדק and משפּת was the problem. In our verse, God identifies the problem and answers his own calling for righteousness in v2.

The possibility of applying the sense of salvation and righteousness to this case is tempting. Like in v8aβ we come across a pronominal suffix on the subject that is promised the recipient. The question also in this colon: What or whom is the origin of what is being promised? We shall see that the answer does not differ from those given above. God is the origin of all that is good, all benevolence towards men. He is also the source of צדק as a concept. Of texts inside the Isaian corpus we may find 41:10 important to understand this. There God promises to uphold the recipient with his “right hand of righteousness”. A bit further, in 45:8, righteousness comes from above like rain. Again we meet YHWH as the active donor or benefactor. Perhaps we may conclude that in its origin righteousness comes from God, and that to human beings it is synonymous to ethical behavior and goodness. In my opinion, this case should be interpreted like those in the previous bicolon, but in such a way as to interpret the righteousness as YHWH himself. YHWH is the one promising gifts and the source of the goodness and righteousness known to the recipient. As stated above, my interpretation of צדק would be the one of salvation, but in this case with YHWH as conveying salvation in person. The other Isaian verses already discussed

³¹ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2005), 838f, 843f.

³² 2 Sam 23:3-4; Isa 11:4f; 32:1f; Jer 23:5f; Pss 45:7f; 72:1-4.

would support such a conclusion. Surely, righteousness is demanded from each and every adherent of the deity, and YHWH promises that he will come himself with the very same מושפת and צדק to the one who strives to uphold it. Like the above commented 59:9, the צדק stands parallel to light and signifies as such the saving YHWH without whom the believers are “groping along the wall like the blind” (59:10).

It is exactly in the parallelism with light that we may link the divine righteousness to concrete phenomena and not abstract, modern concepts. The phenomena are of the theophanic kind, in light. In Isa 45:7f the divine righteousness is not only light, but also parallel to rain. The meteorological links in Isaiah are undeniable, but so are the obvious figurative overtones. In the generosity of YHWH are not only promises of military protection, but also the giving of sunlight and rain.³³ As such the divine righteousness has no exclusive ties to the meteorological phenomena, but functions as a general concept of his saving intervention. Exclusivity or not, however, such links do exist in the world of the ancient Near East, as we will see later on.

Additionally, a verse like Isa 52:12b is an almost direct parallel to v8b. Like in v8bβ, we are presented an image of something along the lines of a military parade, with YHWH as a both front- and rearward of the procession. Koole insists, however, on a distinction between the divine and its salvific action. In his opinion, Trito-Isaiah does not identify YHWH with “our righteousness” the way Jer 23:6 does.³⁴ At least the deity obviously grants the צדק, and Motyer offers the view of righteousness as the front post: “The Lord provides righteousness (53:11; 54:17), the believer wears it as armour.”³⁵ I will maintain, along with Oswalt,³⁶ that YHWH is also present in this verse line. My argument rests on the contextual premises of the pericope, where YHWH calls for a fast consistent of charity and goodwill towards other people. YHWH in salvific action may be seen in every verse line thus far. If righteousness is what you sow, then righteousness will be what you get: YHWH who shines his light, heals and precedes you on your way. Looking back on the conditions of the fourfold promise, the righteous acts Job describes in chapter 31 are consistent with those of Isa 58:6-7. He sees a direct correlation between acts and the reward of God;

³³ cf. also Lev 26:4; Deut 11:14; Isa 30:23; Jer 5:24; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23; Pss 65:10-13; 72:1-7.

³⁴ Koole, *Isaiah III*, 142.

³⁵ J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 481.

³⁶ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 505.

unrighteous acts merit punishment.

v8bβ – A promise of protection

As already mentioned above, military imagery dominates this last colon. The verbal, אָסַף, means to “gather” or “remove”. The common way to interpret this last scene is by imaging YHWH as “gathering” behind the recipient as a rearward. This fits well, as we have just been told that righteousness makes out the frontal protection; now the rear post is dominated by the כְּבוֹד of YHWH. Military imagery connected to the approaching deity, commonly recognized as the *Divine Warrior*³⁷, is recognized also in Deut 33:2, not to mention the quite explicit Hab 3:1-15.

כְּבוֹד is, like the LXX δοξα, a quite exclusive term that is very little concrete and hard to define. BDB applies “abundance, honor, glory”,³⁸ and our definition lies somewhere in between these alternatives. Used here in my translation is “glory”. This word says something about the holiness of YHWH, though it also has to do with his concrete presence. Isa 6:3 is special in this case, as it in the theophanic vision of Isaiah portrays the כְּבוֹד as filling the entire earth. The prophecy of 40:5 is also important to the understanding of the phrase, as the epiphany of the כְּבוֹד of YHWH is associated with the leveling of ground and the straightening of roads in the wilderness. In all probability there is a connection with Isa 35:1-10, a possible reference to the return from exile in Babylon. Perhaps this resembles a wholesome imagery: A parade of returning exiled Judeans, with the כְּבוֹד of YHWH as their rear protection?

It is the rearward exactly I would like to discuss further. Perhaps is this conclusion drawn too far, but it is worth observing that the people are moving from east to west, with the sun in their backs. May it be that the light that wants to “break forth”, with the solar imagery here employed, suggest that it is solar characteristics being tied to the כְּבוֹד of YHWH? In 59:19 the כְּבוֹד of YHWH comes from the east and is likened to a flood. The people are moving westward from Babylon, a distance and context requiring a solid rearward. The memory of Exodus' persecution by the Egyptian soldiers exemplifies this. The most important thing we are able to calculate from this is that the glory connotes the presence of the deity, and that the effect of it

³⁷ Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: a Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press, 2002), 388.

³⁸ BDB (3519) 458f.

is salvation and protection. However, the כבוד-excursus (ch. 2.b.v) provides further insight in this matter.

Further mention of the exodus narrative is required, however, as the pillars of smoke and fire escorted the people at day and night. The pillars were an expression of the concrete presence of God. The pillars both lead the way (Exod 13:21f) like in v8b α , and served as rearward (Exod 14:19f) to the Israelites. The כבוד is not mentioned in Exodus until the giving of the manna, but in common with v8 the pillars of Exod 13-14 meant the interfering, protecting presence of YHWH with the additional qualities of shining in the night. It makes good sense if YHWH is the one effecting light, healing, righteousness, and now additionally provides military protection. The use of the second pronominal suffix, as noted above, supports the image of YHWH as a dedicated, personal god. He is the origin of light, healing and justice, and he wishes to give it to the one receiving his message and keeping his fast satisfactorily.

According to Westermann, vv8-9a are of special importance to understand salvation as a concept in Isaiah. If one includes the first verse line of v9, the essence of the text might be that when YHWH has made it clear that he is listening, salvation is near.³⁹ Salvation is thematically very interesting in our context, with key issues like צדק and matters of reestablishment.

Summary

The verse lines coherently form a promise to the recipient from YHWH, spoken through the mouth of the prophet. In its entirety the verse is about the promise of YHWH in four dimensions: He wants to be the light, healing, righteousness and rearward of the recipient. All four are aspects of the salvific intervention of God that is promised to the believers in this chapter. It is a requirement that the believers start to keep the fast properly and to cease their evil. Accordingly, the four promises can be said to mirror the kind of behavior YHWH expects from his followers. The tension is easily noticed in the grammar, as every strophe carries a pronominal suffix to tell whose light, healing, righteousness or rearward is in question. It is here one may trace the thought that one reaps what one sows; YHWH will treat you in accord with how you treat those around you. We saw this in light of Job 22:28, and also in chapter 31, where the protagonist complains that he is being treated unfairly. This is

³⁹ Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 338f.

much reminiscent of the Judeans who complain that God does not reward their fast. Unlike Job, the people moaning in 58:3 are charged with selfish motives and cannot expect YHWH to be satisfied until they turn from their egocentrism and start to become what they themselves pray for.

The striking element, which in this dissertation is the focal point, is the solar character of the imagery so strongly connected to YHWH and his actions. This image becomes clearer in 59:19, brought to culmination in 60:1-3 and confirmed again in 60:19f. The particularity about our v8 is met in the triple correlation of light, righteousness and the glory of YHWH. The three concepts here converge in a unique way. Additionally a fourth concept appears, healing, and thus creates an external link to the prophecy of Mal 3:20. Solar characteristics apparent in v8 rest mainly upon the mention of common light (אור) in addition to the noun particular to “dawn” (שחר). But as we will see, both healing, righteousness and the protective imagery are found elsewhere, similarly interlinked.

ii. Isaiah 60:1-3

¹Rise! Shine! Now your light is coming⁴⁰

The glory of YHWH rises to ascend above you.

²For behold! Darkness overwhelms the land

a heavy cloud the peoples

Then ascending above you YHWH will rise

and His glory ascending above you to be seen.

³Then the peoples will walk toward your light

and kings toward your dawning⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Alternatively: “Rise! My light comes to be your light”. Either אורי is a noun with a first person pronominal suffix, or a verb in the imperative like קומי preceding it. Furthermore, Isaiah’s supposed use of this verb form is far from certain. It is found in Isa 27:11, but its hiph.inf. form concerns lighting a fire. Its appearance as a hiph.impf. in 60:19 is undebated, and serves as an argument for its presence also in 60:1. 60:19, however, serves an even better argument for the other case: had the verb form of the root אור been intended in 60:1, we would have seen a hiphil and not a qal. This might seem an unnecessary effort to point out a potential misreading, but in my view a change like this has theological implications. In the case of the noun being the correct alternative, the light of YHWH is given, “coming” from him to be a light considered as that of the 2fsg. However, the 2fsg suffixes in Isa 58:8 were not problematic, and I do not see a problem in maintaining the majority reading here either. The alternative reading suggested provides, in all humility, an interesting take on the verse.

This crucial chapter in the Trito-Isaian section is commenced with these beautifully stylized sentences, all promising support from YHWH. Contextually the chapter introduces realization of salvation, whereas the earlier chapters contain exhortations and accusations. The deity is here portrayed with characteristics and abilities much reminiscent of those of the sun. This analysis will pursue the question of whether one may understand the wording of Isaiah 60:1-3 as essential solar language, and what kind of importance such an understanding will force upon the context.

The people are unfaithful and corrupt, but optimism is sensed throughout chapters 56-59: the goodwill of YHWH is near, but dependent on the wholehearted repentance of Judah. Chapter 59 asserts that if Judah is willing to turn from their evil, righteousness and covenantal relations will once again be established. As noted earlier, there is much disagreement regarding the Trito-Isaian chapters' connections with each other. Like Koole I assert that chapters 59 and 60 have a clear correspondence,⁴² but in all probability they are separate corpora, as it seems as if 59:21 introduces a new stream of communication answering that of 56:1-59:20. As Koole points out, specific terms occur in both Isa 59 and 60, and in particular the light imagery. Without discussing compositional issues further, it seems as if ch. 60 functions as the fulfillment of the promises given in ch. 59. Thus it appears that the Judeans have heeded the call to repentance. The clearest correspondence between Isa 59 and 60 may be found in 59:19, which gives special attention to the כבוד of YHWH, a connection I will elaborate on later in this exegesis. Ch. 60 is the first chapter in Trito-Isaiah to announce tidings like these: A change of attitude is definite, because all exhortations and conditions are eliminated. The one spoken to is Jerusalem (inherently and consequently, its people), the suffixes and verb affirmativa pointing towards a 2fsg. This attitude continues throughout chapter 64.

Chs. 60-66 can be said to utter a more or less coherent promise of salvation. The main foci rest on the promise of salvation and major changes in the relationship between YHWH and the people. The voices, however, vary somewhat: YHWH speaks in ch. 60, while a prophetic voice enters in chs. 61 and 62. Fittingly, the corpus of 60-62 has been deemed a core or nucleus to the alleged Trito-Isaian

⁴¹ Alternatively: "*rising brightness*". This alternative appreciates both words employed (לננה זרחך).

However, no conflict here. "Dawning" was chosen to better capture the imagery (BDB (5051) 618).

⁴² Koole, *Isaiah III*, 219.

collection.⁴³ As such this passage is of grave importance to this last of the Isaian tradition. Prophet and people converse with YHWH in chs. 63-64, while the main voice of the two last chapters is the deity's.

Verse divisions

v1a - Call to action: YHWH is endowing with light

v1b - The glory of YHWH ascending

v2a - Problem: Darkness and obscurity

v2b α - Solution: YHWH rises

v2b β - The glory of YHWH ascending

v3 - Result of endowing: Nations drawn to the light

Here can be seen a concentric structure with a problem/solution kind of keystone focused on the effect of YHWH's luminous interaction. I deem the light-endowing of the first verse to reach a result or consequence in the third. The aforementioned problem/solution case is a circumstance, likely the background, for the endowing. As such it is of great importance for the context in which our pericope came to existence and usage. The verse division will also serve as the structure of the following analysis of Isa 60:1-3.

v1a – Call to action: YHWH is endowing with light

v1a is an outright promise of saving action. YHWH's light will shine for the recipient and function as if it was the recipients' own. Oswalt emphasizes the notion of reflection, with Israel mirroring the divine glory.⁴⁴ Similarly, Goldingay envisions the reflection of the sun on the white temple stone of Jerusalem (see below).⁴⁵ Some give particular attention to the shining of Moses' face (Exod 34:29-35), returning from the mountain and rendezvous with God.⁴⁶ HB theology presupposes God himself as affiliated with bright light both in narrative⁴⁷ and prophetic⁴⁸ theophany and figurative

⁴³ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 534; John Goldingay, *Isaiah* (NIBCOT; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001), 334.

⁴⁴ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 537.

⁴⁵ Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 342.

⁴⁶ Koole, *Isaiah III*, 217; cf. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 357.

⁴⁷ Exod 13:21f; Deut 33:2.

⁴⁸ Ezek 1:26-28, 10:4; Hab 3:3-4.

speech in situations of correspondence with the praying subject.⁴⁹ In addition, following this line of light-association, tradition holds that human beings cannot see or hear with God without perishing.⁵⁰ It may seem strange, then, that the blessing of Aaron (Num 6:23-27) requests the face of YHWH to shine upon the one prayed for. Like the pentateuchal references just cited suggest, God appearing to his followers signify an action of goodwill and salvation. Here then we might reach a core aspect of what Isa 60's understanding of the light of God might convey. Its presence connotes the saving action of God. This fits the pattern of the Trito-Isaian development from accusations to joyful apocalyptic expectations: Here the tide has turned, and God is making his face shine upon Zion.⁵¹

Here must not, either, be forgotten the first creative act of God (Gen 1:3) after the creation of heaven and earth.⁵² "Let there be light" perhaps resonates in v1's first command. God is intervening and commanding, with light as an intended result. Hence it is plausible that herein may be found a thought of *creatio continua*, generally considered as the maintenance and upholding of creation. By light YHWH commenced his creational act, and by light he upholds it in saving action. To support this notion may be considered Gen 1:18, wherein the darkness (חָשֶׁךְ, also present in Isa 60:2a) is separated from the light.

Turning to the semantics of our pericope, the choice of words concern light, the root אָרָא, is heavily employed throughout the Hebrew Bible, especially in the books of Isaiah and Job. It turns out that the Isaian use of the noun to a great extent utilizes the symbolical notions connected to the word. In two thirds of the instances, Isaiah employs the noun figuratively to describe the saving or intervening act of God. Compared to the rest of the Hebrew biblical books, the same connection is made in about ten percent of the occurrences. The texts outside Isaiah to correspond with this kind of symbolical use are primarily found in Psalms. Other figurative usage relating light to the presence of God or his divine decrees are found in the wisdom literature of Job and Proverbs.⁵³

Nevertheless, it seems as if the event taking place in v1a constitutes the

⁴⁹ 2 Sam 22:9,13,15; Pss 18:29; 118:27.

⁵⁰ Exod 33:20-23; Deut 4:33; Judg 6:22; 13:19-23; Isa 6:4 (seraphim covering eyes in Isa 6:2).

⁵¹ Cf. Pss 31:17; 67:2; 80:4,8,20; 119:135 (Interestingly, correlated with the giving of law); Prov 16:15 (of the king); Dan 9:17. For all of these: פָּנֵי אֱלֹהִים = make your face shine, but JPS: "show favor".

⁵² Koole, *Isaiah III*, 217.

⁵³ This is not to say, of course, that divine association with light is not made elsewhere using different vocabulary.

endowing of light. The question important to our context is what, exactly, the light signifies. It appears as if Zion is commanded to shine, perhaps anticipating the event of the light coming to Zion in the following words. The passage bears resemblance to Isa 9:2, wherein the promise of light is made to a nation in darkness.⁵⁴ Is the light the deity himself, the presence of YHWH or simply effected by him? Or is the light inherently Zion's already, and denotes the city's ability to do good or otherwise put on its best appearance in expectance of the coming of YHWH? All of the alternatives are feasible considering other biblical usage, so further discussion of the semantics will not lead anywhere. We will have to lean upon the context, and see it as parallel to the next line; the glory of YHWH ascending. This will, however, find support in similar verses where bright light is associated with the glory (כבוד) of YHWH (Ezek 1:28; 43:2). Seeing v1a as parallel to v1b may, then, indicate YHWH's intervention and blessing bestowed upon Zion. The divine light is by pronominal suffix that of man, but in YHWH's upholding of creation it is "wielded" by YHWH as his salvific instrument. As such it is possible to see the light as gift, tool, and saving capacity at the same time. Our pericope points toward a figurative reward for the faithful in the coming of YHWH robed in light, in his כבוד.

v1b – The glory of YHWH ascending

In v1b the glory of YHWH ascends as was promised in chapter 59. The two lines of verse 1 are to be considered parallel. But what do they convey? The peculiar use of light imagery is utilized in the previous verse. What about this line? At first sight there is nothing very specific about the terminology. That poetry that intends to portray the supernatural would speak of God or his glory as "ascending" would perhaps not surprise anyone. But to the Hebrew reader this verse would probably connect back to 58:8,10 and 59:19 in a way that would be hard to translate directly. This is solar terminology; talk of God conveying imagery, similes and epithets reminiscent of the sun. The verb *צָהַר* is commonly employed in cases regarding the sun rising. Exceptions figuratively describing the appearance of YHWH are found in this verse and in Deut 33:2. Apart from one occasion of describing king Uzziah's leprous "outbreak" (2 Chr 26:19), all occurrences of this verb concern the sun. What we have here, then, is a quite unique use of the verb, portraying YHWH with the solar function

⁵⁴ Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 358.

of "rising" above the one spoken to, Zion. The mentioned Deut 33:2 speaks in a comparable manner; YHWH is shining upon "them" (the Israelites) from Seir (northern peaks of Mt. Hermon)⁵⁵. In concord with our previous observations of אָרָר we may assume that this solar behavior of God depicts his goodwill towards his people. When he is "shining upon" and "ascending above" his people, much like the sun, he is bestowing his favor and glorious presence to be with his followers. The verb stands parallel to the "coming" (בִּיָּא) of the light in v1a. Goldingay understands the command to stand radiant as taking on the reflection of the dawning YHWH, like in vv19-20.⁵⁶ Goldingay's contribution is very intriguing, and I believe he here its the nail on the head.

We are now certain that this verse employs solar terminology, and as mentioned it connects back to previous verses like 58:8,10 and 59:19. It is the latter that we now will briefly comment upon. The solar language we have uncovered in 60:1 was, it seems, prepared in this verse. The verb זָרַח discussed above comes from the same root as the noun מִזְרַח, much more frequently used and denoting "east", or more exactly, "the place of sunrise" (often accompanied by שֶׁמֶשׁ). In 59:19, its importance is, like in 60:1, marked by the YHWH כְּבוֹד. If east not only is where the sun rises, but also the origin of the glory of YHWH, does one here see the contours of an Isaian solar theology? We shall not, in this instance, elaborate on this, but consider the rest of the pericope.

v2a - Problem: Darkness and obscurity

The reader is made aware that there is a problem: Darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ) overwhelms the land, while a heavy cloud (עֲרַפְלִי) does the same thing to the peoples. Now, a message like this might remind us of doom oracles like the ones of Joel 2. We need not, however, to reach outside of Isaiah to find corresponding examples. Above, we treated the אָרָר occurrences of Isaiah, and found most of them to be addressing the saving action of God. Three of the instances,⁵⁷ however, approach the opposite: Absence of light as something intrinsically hostile, sometimes as the outright punitive action of God. This notion is far more prevalent in the rest of the HB, well

⁵⁵ BDB (8149) 927.

⁵⁶ Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 342.

⁵⁷ Isa 5:30; 13:10 (2x).

documented in the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos.⁵⁸ Needless to say, the direct references to darkness and heavy clouds gives antonymous emphasis to the immediately preceding exposition of light imagery. The darkness of the land might in this context be seen as sin and corruption. A comparable, though literal, passage cited by Oswalt, is found in Exod 10:21-23.⁵⁹ There the Israelites are stationed in Goshen and have light, while Egypt lies swept in darkness. If this memory is brought to the fore, then the reader again is reminded of the imminent salvation of YHWH.

What we encounter here, then, is unique neither to the Isaian tradition nor to the HB canon. Statements bereaving the recipient of light portend a sense of gloom not only in the literal sense. If light gives all the positive connotations discussed above, then its absence must provoke equal adverse implications. The problem presented is in dire need of a solution, but it is already hinted at in the glad tidings of v1. The build-up in chapter 59 to the crescendo in 60:1 does not anticipate such a thing as dark clouds gathering. The believer does not despair at the words of v2a, since he or her a moment ago was informed that YHWH was on his way. It is obvious to the reader that this statement reminiscent of the Isaian days of yore, when God vowed penance upon the people, will not stand alone, but will be answered momentarily. The “dark skies” that is sin, corruption and enemy activity will come and go on earth no matter how well off the nation is, but when YHWH comes he will eliminate them forever. The result of this glorious coming is seen in 60:18-20 (cf. Isa 24:21-23; Zech 14:4-7). YHWH will not fail where the regular sun has to give in to the concealing clouds. A correlation between mourning and lack of light is hinted at in v20b.⁶⁰ It is in this respect that Oswalt sees a clear parallel to the sun of righteousness (see below) promised in Mal 3:20,⁶¹ the one that will replace the unstable celestial elements of creation.

v2ba – Solution: YHWH rises

The rising (again, *אָרָא*) of YHWH necessarily takes us back to the previous verse. This time, his ascending is presented (or rather, reasserted) as a solution to the problem just submitted by the Isaian author. As suggested above, there was never a threat.

⁵⁸ Jer 4:23; 13:16; 25:10; Ezek 32:7,8; Amos 5:18,20; 8:9. Cf. also Job: Job 3:9,16; 12:25; 18:5,6,18; 30:26; 37:21; 38:15.

⁵⁹ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 538.

⁶⁰ Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 342.

⁶¹ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 557f.

The first part of the second bicola of v2 merely repeats the notion of v1: Zion's light is on its way. If the reader ever was unsure of what or who were supposed to effect or actuate the light, then here is the answer: YHWH *is* the light of Zion. We have already discussed the verb, זרח, much employed regarding solar matters, both metaphorically and literally. The word left, then, apart from the tetragrammaton, is a variation on the common preposition על, namely על־יך. Its function is to point to YHWH's position; YHWH is rising *above* the believer. There is nothing new about the perception of God as residing in heaven. The connection between the words used here, however, reminds us of the sun in its place in the sky. We may conclude here, in my opinion, that the imagery is not possible to confuse: The purpose of the pericope is to liken YHWH to the sun: Trustworthy and rising every day, suspended in majesty above Zion. The prophetic voice seeks to assure YHWH's loyalty and goodwill towards the people. Remember also, in conjunction with the preposition, that the divine name of El Elyon (see particularly ch. 2.b.i, on Ps 47:6) has a certain frequency in the HB canon.

An interesting correspondence of directly associating YHWH with the *light of Israel* may be found in Isa 10:17. There the light of Israel "will be a fire", and the Holy One "a flame". Other cases of this kind of correlation exist,⁶² where YHWH's luminous and fiery circumstances in theophany directly signify salvation. This might tell us that there might have been precedence in designating YHWH as the *light of Israel*. What traditional origin, archaic or not, would be difficult to answer in lack of case material.

v2bβ – The glory of YHWH ascending

The first bicola of v2 sounds troubling for the addressee, but the second brings relief: A promise is given that YHWH will shine on the recipient, complemented by a parallel affirmation of the divine כבוד being seen above him/her. The "glory" once again surfaces, parallel to the mention of it in v1. Hebrew mention of the presence of YHWH goes to great lengths to avoid communicating a literal presence. Since, obviously, the unapproachable YHWH could not be seen or heard without the human attendant dying, a need arose to make his presence possible among men. The כבוד often became the solution to this delicate matter (see ch. 2.b.v). Here it is

⁶² Deut 33:2; Isa 2:5; Mic 7:8; Pss 27:1; 104:4.

accompanied by solar imagery, perhaps also employed to make the notion of a discernible deity possible. Still, the idea of "glory" fits well with the theme of light in the imagery. The sun gives off light like YHWH is made known by his כבוד.

The parallel to v1 is complete, and the point is made without a doubt: The glory, YHWH's loyalty and goodwill, will be *seen* (יראה) above Zion. By whom will it be seen? The answer follows in the next verse, but no doubt there is a point to be made here: This light-endowing extravagance is apparently not for Zion's sake alone. Jerusalem is not alone in the world, as the Isaian tradition is quite explicit about. Here it appears that others are watching. What would be the point of shining, if no one were present to see or be guided by the light? For Zion, the point of favor and goodwill is obvious, but Isa 42:6 might help explain the function of a radiant people and city: YHWH has made his chosen one *a light unto the nations*. The bridge even goes back to a proto-Isaian passage: 11:10, where the peoples seek to approach "the root of Jesse", speaks of his abode as filled with כבוד. Themes encountered thus correlate neatly with Isaian tradition.

v3 - Result of endowing: Nations drawn to the light

This last verse of our pericope has been of special interest for the dominating notion that universalism is a particular feature characteristic of the Trito-Isaian text. We have deduced that YHWH is the light of Israel, so that when the second person pronominal suffix is attributed to the "light", there is reference to YHWH. What, then, do this verse communicate? Not only that people of different tribes will come to Zion, but also the peoples and kings of other nations will walk towards the radiance of Jerusalem. As Motyer points out, "...the ruled and the rulers ... signify total response".⁶³ Koole emphasizes that the light of Zion not is about the Israelite political power in the world, but about the role played out as being the people partaking in the fellowship with God, signified by light.⁶⁴ The grandeur and totality of the calling to Zion is underscored in this strophe. The image is taken up again in v5a, there as portraying the joy of Jerusalem in its newfound brilliance.⁶⁵ V5a confirms what v3 also proclaim:

⁶³ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 494.

⁶⁴ Koole, *Isaiah III*, 225.

⁶⁵ This verb, נהר, is only found elsewhere in Ps 34:6, used in the same joyous imagery. The cognate noun in Job 3:4, however, refers to daylight. Another verb of the same root signifies a river, flow or stream, and becomes immensely interesting in connection with Isa 59:19b, which suddenly may take on very particular solar implications (cf. Ezek 43:1f). However, currently such a connection is vague at best. BDB (5100, 5102, 5105) 625f.

the light and even the dawning now seems as if inherently Zion's! The duality in the statement is obvious as the light is of course donated by YHWH, but to the human attendees (peoples and kings) the dawning and the brightness is that of Jerusalem. As such they are drawn not only to a radiant city, but to its benevolent deity bestowing his glorious light upon it.

Hence we might infer that this verse announces a future where Zion not only is the cult center for the tribes of Israel, but for the collective humankind drawn there by the radiant brightness of Zion that is YHWH himself. Quite unexpectedly a vision of gentile peoples parading towards Jerusalem appears in this late Isaian addition to HB theology. This theme continues until 60:16 and resonates throughout the next two chapters as well. Isa 62:2 provides a parallel to the light of Zion, namely righteousness. This fits well with our developing image of YHWH dawning on Zion to eliminate the darkness and obscurity that is sin and corruption.⁶⁶

Portrayed here is a kind of destiny of overlordship for the Israelites, and it seems as if the prophecies of Isa 9:1-10:27 come to fulfillment. Further confirmation is found in chapter 11, with culmination in the aforementioned v10. The land is at peace, and the peoples are drawn to "the root of Jesse". This kind of universalistic theology may be found elsewhere in the HB (chiefly late), but most importantly to the pericope treated here, corresponding verses are found in the Isaian framework (assuming that its background is that of Isaiah's final redaction), in 2:1-4. More surprisingly, also in the Proto-Isaian contribution it appears as prophecy of impending Egyptian conversion (19:16-25).⁶⁷ Watts sees, unlike Westermann,⁶⁸ the account in question as rooted in a specific historical event. He believes the setting to be a kind of royal ceremony where the Achaemenid emperor bestows royal favor upon the temple city Jerusalem.⁶⁹ This royal attention *is* the dawning light from Isa 58 and 60:1-3. I believe Watts to be far off in his analysis; to the best of my knowledge there are no signs of Persian influence in our context that would justify the very core of Trito-Isaiah to be some kind of parable of Persian goodwill. I would rather follow Westermann in his theory of partial fulfillment applicable to the later, possible future: "This is typical of Trito-Isaiah's way of expressing himself, equating God's advent with the advent of salvation (...), but leaving it in the air without firmly fixing it in history;

⁶⁶ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 535f.

⁶⁷ Herbert Gordon May, "Theological Universalism in the Old Testament," *JBR* 16/2 (1948): 100-107.

⁶⁸ Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 357.

⁶⁹ Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 863f.

and this is reinforced by the metaphor of the rising of the light.”⁷⁰

Summary

Isaiah 60:1-3 is a work of confidence, rooted in expectance or experience of YHWH's saving action. There is firm belief that YHWH bestows his favor upon his holy city, and the imagery by which this takes place is a consequent solar depiction. Like in Isa 58:8 we encounter the idea of the light signified as the inherent property of the addressee, even if the context is quite clear on its origin in the divine. The consequent use of the second person pronoun points to the passage's obvious motif of encouragement and glory. The verses are pure celebration; displayed here is firm belief in a stable relationship between YHWH and his people. I believe the setting to lie in the expected future, yet in some ways it has already come to fulfillment. The passage introduces the concept of universalism in a very concrete way, in the coming of the peoples to Zion. Kings and nations are drawn there by the dawning radiance of the city. Like Isa 58:8, the light-endowing event constitutes an act of salvation. Yet 60:1-3 has a broader focus: Iniquity and corruption from are surely alluded to in v2a, and the light is counteractive to this, but the endowing is taken even further. The glory of having alien kings and peoples drawn to one's city (in peace) hails a new era for the Israelite people. Summing up, salvation is in vv1-3 crowned with even more glory. Not only is there redemption, but also an elevation of the ones bestowed favor upon.

This bestowing of favor is quite consistently described in terms of light and elucidation. The dawning of YHWH causes the holy city to reflect his glorious light, opposing the darkness both in its midst and outside of it. Divine promises of salvation occur in this same kind of light, and additionally the glory of YHWH stands parallel to it. So when YHWH dawns on the city and it takes on his reflection, it itself will seem as if having a light and a dawn to which the peoples of the earth will be drawn.

⁷⁰ Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 357f.

iii. Malachi 3:20

²⁰*As for the ones of you fearing my name,
the⁷¹ sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.
You will go out, bouncing about like calves from the stall.*

Our verse is not only located as one of the last in the book of Malachi, but also as one of the last in the entire prophetic canon. For the Protestant branches of Christian canon tradition, this also means last in the HB. The arrangement of the canon is in many respects of great importance to the believer, and to the Christian tradition, as I will comment on later, a verse like this is not unimportant as it forms a bridge to the New Testament tradition. The verse is in the MT and the LXX reckoned as Mal 3:20, while others⁷² employ a fourth chapter, making this verse Mal 4:2.

The book of Malachi, meaning “my messenger”, is quite possibly an anonymous work.⁷³ Some few scholars suggests that Malachi is a proper name, as it may be a shortened form of Malakhiyah (“messenger of Yah/God”)⁷⁴. The book is quite small, but consisting of several exhortations and accusations made by God towards a corrupt priesthood and a deceitful people of Judah. The book warns of the judgment of God, soon to be unleashed upon the people if they do not turn from their evil. Chapter 3 promises the arrival of the Malachi, the very same name or form as in the superscription of 1:1. The messenger comes as a solution to the problem presented in the book: He, an angel/messenger “of the covenant” (מלאך הברית) will restore order and purify the Levitical temple practice (3:1-3). The priesthood has gravely misbehaved (2:1-9). The reference to the covenant immediately suggests his mission as one of restoring the covenantal relationship between the Judeans and YHWH. From 3:6 on, accusations are made to the “sons of Jacob”. Thus in our passage, the entirety of the Judean community is addressed.

The verse in question is part of a greater unity, that of 3:13-3:21,⁷⁵ wherein theodicy is an important theme. YHWH answers complaints referred to in v14, as it

⁷¹ See discussion below.

⁷² Vulg., NRSV, NAS, NIV et al.

⁷³ Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmanns, 1987), 154f; David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: a Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press, 1995), 165f.

⁷⁴ Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi* (AB 25D; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 17.

⁷⁵ Even if vv18 and 19 are separated by a setumah, the thematic interdependence of the two sections seems undeniable, and the two will here be treated as one.

seems as if a part of the believing community are disgruntled by a non-intervening deity. The accusations concern lack of righteousness (albeit no such word is used until v18): v14f testifies to an unhappy mass of followers that have lost faith in YHWH's action against scoffers; the same fate befalls the wicked and the righteous.⁷⁶ No consequences seem to reach the arrogant⁷⁷ (זדים) or the doers of wickedness (עשי רשעה). A solution to this problem is presented in v16f as we are taken to a scene where the names (seemingly) of all the righteous fearing YHWH's name are written in a "book of remembrance". The righteous are promised a status as his סגולה, traditionally "treasured possession"⁷⁸ who will then be easily distinguished from the wicked (vv17f). What follows in v19 is a promise of death and destruction to all the arrogant and wicked: A reference to an approaching day of fire (imagery of chastisement twice applied). v21 continues by including the faithful as exacting punishment on the evildoers. The possibly later v23 calls this day "(the) day of YHWH",⁷⁹ and we know the concept from several other prophetic passages pertaining to divine judgment and the eschaton.⁸⁰

The function of our v20, then, is a promise of support to the loyal: Those who fear of the name of YHWH (יראי שמי). It is a keystone of the pericope 3:13-21 as it presents a solution to the problem: YHWH will come and finally righteousness prevails as the faithful are rewarded with healing and joy. In v21 we are reminded of the destruction of the wicked and the arrogant, now performed by the righteous. As it stands, the pattern of vv13-21 is reminiscent of Isaiah 58:1-12: Disgruntled believers are verbally disciplined by a deity who in turn guarantees the coming of his righteousness. A prerequisite is the continued faithfulness of the community. Like in 58:8, 3:20 serves as the rewarding keystone applying solar imagery to portray the coming of YHWH and his saving presence.

Mal 3:20 is a strangely formulated promise of reward. What does it mean when "the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings"? This analysis will investigate how the postexilic writing of Malachi portends a particular kind of imagery applied to a deity affiliated or associated with the sun or its capacities.

⁷⁶ Hill, *Malachi*, 327.

⁷⁷ Smith's translation of זדים. Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (Waco: Word, 1984), 337.

⁷⁸ JPS, NIV, ESV; However, cf. NRSV et al.: "special possession".

⁷⁹ Cf. the disagreeing Petersen, *Malachi*, 224.

⁸⁰ E.g. Isa 13:6; Ezek 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1f; 11; 3:3; 4:14; Zeph 1:14.

The verse might be divided in the following way:

v20a A promise of wellbeing

v20b Wellbeing described

So far as a single verse like Mal 3:20 are in need of further branching, this is as far as I dare to go without dissecting it unnecessarily. In my view there is no need for any further speculations regarding redaction or other compositional issues. The verse needs no bracketing, but is split in two here for the sake of exegetical consistency.

v20a – A promise of wellbeing

This first stanza promises that the sun of righteousness will rise for the ones fearing the name of YHWH (יִרְאֵי שְׁמִי). The semantical walkthrough will follow the chronology of the Hebrew text. The very first word is the one of “rising” (זָרַח), a verb particular to the rising of the sun. In most cases where this root is employed, it concerns the rising or dawning of the sun or imagery of the like. The word needs no further comment, as it has been thoroughly treated in the exegesis of Isa 60:1-3. Additionally, in this case the common noun “sun” (שֶׁמֶשׁ) is the subject;⁸¹ a very natural circumstance for this verb’s appearance.

Fear,⁸² יִרָא, *of the name* (שְׁמִי) of YHWH is a common idea conveyed in both in ANE religion and in HB theology,⁸³ and predominantly in the late parts of the canon. As mentioned earlier the book of Malachi is highlighting the disapproval of a corrupt priesthood. Introducing these accusations, the priesthood is in 1:6 accused of *scorning*⁸⁴ the name of YHWH. The divine charge is one of inadequate sacrificial standards. In this verse the concept of fearing YHWH is antonymically paralleled to the scorning of “the name”⁸⁵. In this situation, then, *the name* and God are equaled. To dishonor the deity’s name is to dishonor the deity. Malachi confirms this in the next chapter, where the accusations continue. Here, in 2:5, the contemporary temple official is compared to the original Levi, whose conduct was good and honorable. His fear of God is paralleled to the awe inspired by the name (niph. of חָתַת). Likewise, in

⁸¹ cf. Gen 32:32; Exod 22:2; Judg 9:33; 2 Sam 23:4 et al.

⁸² JPS: “reverence”. Alternatively, in many occasions I find “awe” a more fitting translation.

⁸³ Hans Ferdinand Fuhs, “יִרָא,” *TDOT* VI:290-315 (297f).

⁸⁴ Here indebted to the JPS translation.

⁸⁵ Note that no definite article is present (but a first person pronoun is), but to avoid confusion it is rendered as if there were.

3:16, the fear of YHWH is parallel to the honoring of his name. It seems evident that the significance of the fear of YHWH is of major importance in all three of the chapter divisions.

However, as stated above, the concept of fear of the divine is also important in ANE religion, and is regarded by some to be the oldest term to describe the idea of religion.⁸⁶ In Egypt it is associated with performance of cult activities, while the Mesopotamian and Canaanite correspondent additionally applies the idea to literal fear (more on this in the walkthrough of 2 Sam 23:3-4 in ch. 2.b.i).⁸⁷

Concerning other Biblical literature, lines are first and foremost drawn to the commandment of Exod 20:7 and Deut 5:11. The name of YHWH is not to be taken in vain, misused or abused in any way. No oaths shall be sworn by it, nor shall anyone be forgiven of doing so. The reverence of the holiest of names is strongly emphasized. Exemplifying this, in the tradition of cult centralization the words of YHWH repeatedly refers to Jerusalem as a place for *my name*. The conclusion of the Deuteronomic law contains among other things the exhortation to live by all of the commandments contained in the book, and to “fear the name” lest one is culpable and stricken by the plagues of Egypt (Deut 28:58). Neh 1:11 is a good postexilic source for this kind of phrasing, and it may also be found in Psalmic literature.⁸⁸ We may additionally mention Isa 59:19, which was treated shortly in the walkthrough of Isa 60:1-3. Here the fear of the name of YHWH shall take place in the west, while the fear of his glory (כבוד) shall take place in the east. Its reference to the east shows, as discussed, a high probability of dependence on solar terminology. Nonetheless, to seek justification for anything specifically “solar” about the name-fearing is probably a cul-de-sac. However, there is probably a connection to the already discussed concept of death upon seeing YHWH. We find many examples of fear in cases where the divine approaches human beings who are afraid to die from standing in God's presence,⁸⁹ fittingly, the deity and his messengers often introduce their message to their addressees with “fear not” (אל-תירא).⁹⁰

It may be that the focus on the ירא of YHWH and his name is prevalent in the book of Malachi because of the current emergence of Deuteronomistic teaching.

⁸⁶ Fuhs, *TDOT* VI:297f.

⁸⁷ Fuhs, *TDOT* VI:299f.

⁸⁸ Pss 61:6; 86:11; 102:16; 119:63,74.

⁸⁹ Exod 20:18-20; 34:30; Judg 6:22f; Isa 6:4.

⁹⁰ Gen 15:1; 26:24; Jud 6:23; Dan 10:12,19.

Observed by Mitchell, Smith and Bewer a century ago, the book of Malachi shows additional redactional tendencies of legalism,⁹¹ an inclination not uncommon for postexilic writing. Hill sums up that the “fear” “connotes especially loyalty towards [YHWH] as the God of the covenant, moral response (proper conduct), obedience (to the revealed will of God), and right worship”.⁹² The covenant terminology invoked by the “treasured possession”⁹³ (סגולה) is, although not a heavily employed term in the Hebrew Bible, consonant with the ones fearing the name of YHWH. In 3:17 it is utilized to suggest a new definition of who the סגולה really is: the יראי יהוה, mentioned in v16.⁹⁴ We may safely presume that the equal יראי שמו, the name-fearers, are the ones keeping with the divine decrees and thus have a place in the mentioned “book of remembrance”. Not only that, but they are here awarded another promise: The healing sun of righteousness, to which we now will move on.

The sun of righteousness, שמש צדקה (LXX: ἡλιος δικαιοσυνης), the central term of our treatment of this verse, provides a multitude of different associations and connotations in various directions. The phrase is unique as far as the Hebrew Bible is concerned; yet the words in separate occur in abundance. שמש is a quite concrete term and rarely employed without the celestial body being in question. Here, however, it seems obvious that imagery is evoked, because of the attributes of both righteousness and healing.⁹⁵ צדקה, on the other hand, is of the more abstract, conceptual kind, and its use ranges widely in the HB. I will return to this term later on. Grammatically, the phrase שמש צדקה is a construct-genitive, where the צדקה is characterized by the שמש.⁹⁶ Like Hill rightly points out,⁹⁷ there is no definite article present to defend “*the* sun of righteousness”. As I understand the phrase to point toward YHWH, however, it seems belittling to employ an indefinite understanding like “*a* sun of righteousness”.

The sun in itself was not of great importance only in the general area of the Near East, but in all cultures, at all times. The sun and its significance was

⁹¹ Hinckley G. Mitchell, John M. P. Smith and Julius A. Bewer, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah* (ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 81.

⁹² Hill, *Malachi*, 338.

⁹³ Here indebted to the JPS translation.

⁹⁴ Hill, *Malachi*, 360, who quotes Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: the Growth of Community in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 285.

⁹⁵ Karl William Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching: Prophetic Authority, Form Problems, and the Use of Traditions in the Book of Malachi* (BZAW 288; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 348.

⁹⁶ Hill, *Malachi*, 349; Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 327.

⁹⁷ Hill, *Malachi*, 349.

undeniably a theme of immense importance to the ancients, especially in regard to dependency on natural resources and warmth. In the HB we find it mentioned in several different situations. Mainly there is reference to it by way of telling time or direction,⁹⁸ or in cases of describing splendor or magnificence.⁹⁹ Other uses include the familiar idiom of Ecclesiastes: “under the sun” or similar lines of thought pertaining to open, public matters.¹⁰⁰ Apart from these, a greater array of sun references is evidence to biblical attestation of solar worship inside and outside of ancient Israel. Many discuss the possibility of this verse drawing on solar cults of the neighboring, ancient Near Eastern world.¹⁰¹ Virtually all archaic pantheons have a god or goddess directly affiliated with the sun, and generally these gods are personifications: They are presented as the sun itself, with capacities thereof, but with very humanoid features. In Ugarit, to exemplify, the goddess *Šapšu* is “the divine lamp”.¹⁰² Such is the case for all of the ancient Near Eastern pantheons surrounding ancient Israel: The Solar deity traverses the sky, but in addition it has humanoid characteristics in its intervention in human affairs.

The concept of *righteousness* (צדקה) is a term neither easily translated nor explained in our current terms and language. Both reader and translator suffer from the disease of anachronism, and even within the biblical corpus the same word and semantics might convey different ideas and concepts. No analysis of the word or (its relation to) its cognates (most prominently, צדק) will sufficiently elucidate its “original meaning” if not treated carefully. An in-depth analysis will admit the difficulties connected to modern rendition, and suggest comparison with our modern expressions rather than over-confident or bombastic translation. I have already chosen “righteousness” as a general translation in this dissertation, but Bible translations vary from ranges of “justice” to “chastisement” or even “normal” or “salvation”. These variations mirror the scholarly disagreements, which mainly differ in whether or not the concept is to be understood as punitive in any way. Most scholars contend that the righteousness conveys a notion of justice and order, often

⁹⁸ Judg 9:33; Isa 38:8; Pss 72:17; 104:19, Neh 7:3.

⁹⁹ 2 Sam 23:4; Song 6:10.

¹⁰⁰ BDB (8121) 1039.

¹⁰¹ Hill, *Malachi*, 350; Mitchell, Smith and Bewer, *Malachi*, 80; Petersen, *Malachi*, 225; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 339; Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 331.

¹⁰² KTU 1.2 III 15 (Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I. Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* (VTSup 55; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 219).

connected to the divine.¹⁰³ The two deviations of our root are, however, not identical; the mentioned cognate צדק communicates to a greater degree the (principle of) orderly rule and capacity of God, while our צדקה becomes a functional aspect of that capacity.¹⁰⁴ This is brilliantly displayed in Isa 45:8, where צדק is poured like rain down on earth, while the result thereof is צדקה growing like fruit from the ground.¹⁰⁵ Some suggest a Canaanite background for this agricultural focus.¹⁰⁶ Important in this respect is Ps 65:9-14, where God is praised for his giving of rain.¹⁰⁷ Our sun of צדקה is, from these deductions, a little out of the ordinary, since it is not the צדק that is coming from above. This does not matter; either way YHWH is the benefactor of the faithful. An entirely different voice in the discussion of צדקה is encountered in R. Smith, who leans toward an understanding of “victory”, and further relates this to the coming “triumphant” bouncing of the calf.¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the verbal root of the word points toward an act of justification towards one who has been wronged or oppressed. The root is strongly connected to the rule of both deity and king,¹⁰⁹ and thus social as well as cosmic order. We cannot leave the subject of צדקה without making special mention of 2 Sam 23:3-4 in this regard (thoroughly treated below, ch. 2.b.i).¹¹⁰ There the one who rules justly (צדיק) stands parallel to one ruling *in fear of God* (יראת אלהים). Not only that, but he is likened to the morning light (אור בקר) of the rising sun (יזרח-שמש). Further reference to both sunshine and rain confirms again the agricultural possibilities, as these make vegetation sprout up from the ground. This covenantal speech ascribed to David ben Yishai is very probably one of the oldest passages interconnecting these various themes, intriguingly weaving kingship, fear of God, and righteousness together with meteorological phenomena from a benevolent deity. The simile holds forth the idea that a good earthly rule is comparable to the divine one; a good earthly monarch should mirror the heavenly, fearing him. The figurative cause of a good earthly rule will be the providing of vegetational blossom. The earthly, royal throne is based on צדק (Prov 25:5),¹¹¹ and the divine on צדק and משפט (Pss 89:15; 97:2). Interestingly, Weyde has observed that the sun of

¹⁰³ Helmer Ringgren and Bo Johnson, “צדק,” *TDOT* XII:239-264 (243-245).

¹⁰⁴ Ringgren and Johnson, *TDOT* XII:256; Mitchell, Smith and Bewer, *Malachi*, 80.

¹⁰⁵ Ringgren and Johnson, *TDOT* XII:256f.

¹⁰⁶ Ringgren and Johnson, *TDOT* XII:256f.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. also Pss 67:7; 85:11-13.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 339f.

¹⁰⁹ Ringgren and Johnson, *TDOT* XII:251.

¹¹⁰ See also Petersen, *Malachi*, 225.

¹¹¹ Cf. Isa 32:1; Ps 72:7.

righteousness is intimately connected to cosmic order and correlates this with Ps 72: Here the righteous king in vv1-7 rules with his divinely commissioned righteousness; in v5 it is hoped that he will live as long as the sun shines.¹¹² Thus a kingship that maintains order in the land is operates on a model of the divine, which maintains order in creation. It seems that the old monarchic notions have survived well into the exilic and post-exilic times,¹¹³ but since the kingship ceased with Zedekiah in 587 BCE, what took the Judean/Israelite king's place? Good guesses could be a foreign king like Cyrus or Darius, or more probably, YHWH.¹¹⁴

The healing in the wings is our next subject. A *zakeph parvum* accompanying צדקה indicates a small pause in the text, but in our translation not even constituting a comma. Two words remain in this first half of the verse: the "healing in (its) wings", ומרפא בכנפיה. We turn shortly to these last words before rounding up this first half of the verse. The healing is a semi-frequent root (רפא) in the HB. Of noun cases like this one, there are only 13 occurrences, predominantly found in the later HB tradition. However, the verb from the root is represented 60 times, and in the qal only five of the 33 instances do not have God as subject. I take this to signify that healing is, for the most part, an action of YHWH. The deuterocanonical name of Raphael¹¹⁵ the archangel attests a vivid recognition of the notion of a healing deity.

However, in our context the notion of healing probably point toward the same as the imagery of both sun and righteousness: The imminent salvation of YHWH. This correlates fine with other mention of healing in the HB, and we note in particular Isa 58:8, where light and righteousness stands parallel to healing as YHWH's intervening action (see the analysis of Isa 58:8). As Verhoef puts it, "The righteousness of God for his pious ones will cause their "healing" in the most comprehensive sense of the word".¹¹⁶ There are scholars who seek to identify healing as a particular solar feature, but I have yet to find a very tangible relation here. In Egyptian religion Amon-Ra is invoked as a healer,¹¹⁷ but this is also a trait of Isis in her healing of Horus.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 349.

¹¹³ Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 350.

¹¹⁴ Weyde, *Prophecy and Teaching*, 352.

¹¹⁵ Tob 12:15 (LXX): Ραφαηλ.

¹¹⁶ Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 330.

¹¹⁷ "The God Amon as Healer and Magician," translated by John A. Wilson (*ANET*, 369); Jan Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism* (trans. Anthony Alcock; London: Kegan Paul, International, 1995), 85.

¹¹⁸ Stephen Quirke, *The Cult of Ra* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 58.

We saw in Isa 58:8 a possible connection between the rapidly effected healing and monarchic imagery (תַּצְמַח / תַּצְמִיחַ). Even if such monarchic notions may prove mitigated in the post-exilic period, it might seem that the imagery survives and is translated into a different context. Smith expects this new context to concern the hope for a kind of expected messiah figure, and presumes expectancy of a “royal scion” of sorts.¹¹⁹ He rightly associates the solar features to the monarchy, as the association is often made between sun deity, king and legislation (see further in ch. 3.a).¹²⁰ As in my analysis of Isa 58:8, I hesitate to a degree in seeing a king here. This would have fit neatly with ANE religion in general, but the time, context and general theology of the Israelites in this period point toward YHWH as replacing the king. The paradigm shift of the discontinued monarchy seems to mobilize the believing community in a Deuteronomistic change, consolidating the Jerusalemite priesthood as the people’s leaders.

The next word connotes wings, and is probably meant here. In some situations the word applies to garments, or “extremities”, to be exact.¹²¹ Healing is here to be found in the wings. Wings were in ancient art and mythology attributed to deities, genii or spirits, enabling swift mobility and of course flying. YHWH is often portrayed as having wings, particularly in the Psalms.¹²² This imagery most often expresses his salvific capacities, as the wings of YHWH are considered a refuge for the praying subject. The ancient Near Eastern conception of wings in imagery was tightly linked to the idea of protection, and of course heavenly matters: “they convey the idea of a mysterious connection between unapproachable distance and effective protection”.¹²³ In art the sun was very often portrayed with wings to indicate its mobility on the celestial pinnacles, as it moved from east to west. We know this phenomenon from many cultures of the Ancient Near East as the *winged sun disc*, and it is very possible that this exact image is the one in mind here here.¹²⁴ LeMon advocates the view that the wings of YHWH are drawn from the iconography of this exact winged sun disk.¹²⁵ The Near Eastern winged disk occurs in many forms and

¹¹⁹ Smith, “The Near Eastern Background,” 37.

¹²⁰ Smith, “The Near Eastern Background,” 38.

¹²¹ BDB (3671) 489.

¹²² Pss 17:8; 36:8; 57:2; 61:5; 63:8; 91:4; cf. also Exod 19:4; Deut 32:11; Ruth 2:12.

¹²³ Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 251.

¹²⁴ cf. Hill, *Malachi*, 350; Mitchell, Smith and Bewer, *Malachi*, 80; Petersen, *Malachi*, 225; Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 330f; Smith, “The Near Eastern Background,” 37.

¹²⁵ Joel LeMon, *Yahweh’s Winged Form in the Psalms: Exploring Congruent Iconography and Texts*

facets, and on occasion it is linked to the solar deity, to kingship, to cosmic order, to heavenly matters and the like (see 3.b.i). In our passage we might see the sun of righteousness as an image of YHWH coming to reward his faithful.

YHWH *is* the sun of righteousness, it seems. However, like the correlation of righteousness and sun, the notion of a winged sun is matchless in the HB. The closest encounter we may find in Ps 139:9, where the *wings of the dawn* (כנפיר־שחר) are invoked as the ultimate image of being transported away. If the terms are related in essence, then a decent assumption could be that the wings signified the divine omnipresence.¹²⁶ In this case, it represents the manner of which divine salvation would present itself to the faithful. Slightly further removed we find the seemingly older notion of YHWH's movement on the *wings of the wind* (כנפיר־רוח).¹²⁷ The three cases¹²⁸ from the HB, all constructed alike and prefixed by the preposition על, are all partaking in theophany accounts and describe the manner of YHWH's coming as a divine warrior. It needs here be noted that 2 Sam 22 and Ps 18 are practically identically rendered, so it will suffice to compare the Psalm accounts: A striking description of the deity as robed in (Ps 18:13) or exhibiting (Ps 104:2) light occurs in these theophanies. The former includes a description of divine benevolence in reward for human faithfulness (v21), while the latter praises YHWH for his universal generosity (vv10-31) and ends in a prayer to remove all sinners from the earth (v35). There is the possibility that Mal 3:20 simply picks up concepts from older theophany in its imagery. This would have been the place to entertain that notion further, had it not been for the lack of more (and more similar) parallels.

The pronominal suffix in בכנפיה points back to the sun, and thus we now turn to the expression as a whole: שמש צדקה ומרפא בכנפיה. The “sun of righteousness with healing in its wings” is a construct laden with hermeneutical possibilities. Although the sun does rise over good and evil, righteous and unrighteous alike, as the later evangelist put it (Matt 5:45), this metaphorical sun is one of righteousness. It is not the righteousness of deceitful, whimsical men, but of the God who is forever zealous in upholding his faithful on earth. The image of the sun as that of righteousness is

(OBO 242; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 190f.

¹²⁶ Mal 1:11 speaks of the sun's rising and setting in geographical terms, to signify “everywhere”. Cf. Pss 50:1; 113:3, even Isa 59:19.

¹²⁷ 2 Sam 22:11, Pss 18:11; 104:3

¹²⁸ Cf., however, Ho 4:19, which carries the imagery but is understood differently.

fitting, considering “the absolute impartiality of the sun’s rays”.¹²⁹ Hence, to a great degree it corresponds to the notions of Psalm 104, where all creation benefits from the divinely ordered cosmos. The faithful community is promised restoration, the ones of יַעֲקֹב turning back from iniquity (Isa 59:20) and fearing the name of YHWH (יִרְאָה שֵׁנִי). The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, mobile on the heavens and assigned particularly, exclusively for the community in question. The generative powers of the common sun are employed as an image of the saving capacity of God. This is YHWH’s way of showing his benevolence and goodwill. As it stands, it is YHWH’s conclusion of his tirade of allegations towards the unfaithful: He will show benevolence toward his loyal followers. According to Knight, light is synonymous with the salvation of God, and signifies his redemptive intervention.¹³⁰ The coming of God represents salvation for the believing community, the name-fearers, but awards catastrophe and destruction to the wicked and arrogant, which in the next verse will be trod down.

The arrogant and wicked from v19, paralleled with the רַשְׁעִים of v21, are to suffer a harsh fate, and McCarter has made me aware of a very interesting ANE parallel to their doom associated with the sun:¹³¹ “The lord of rays, who makes brilliance, To whom the gods give thanksgiving, Who extends his arms to him whom he loves, (But) his enemy is consumed by a flame.”¹³² This “Hymn to Amon-Re” dates probably from the 14th to the 16th century BCE,¹³³ and provides an intriguing parallel to the destruction of the insolent. The deity is portrayed as the sun who kindly extends his arms (solar beams),¹³⁴ but has a destructive side in destroying his enemies with flame. Is perhaps this an explanatory parallel to Malachi’s concept of a “sun of righteousness”? It certainly fits the notion that YHWH, while he no doubt is portrayed as a beneficent deity, he will wreak havoc among those who oppose him. Unfortunately, no definite answers are available here, but I feel confident that this provides us with an Egyptian two-sided sun of righteousness similar to the one Malachi portrays.

It is perhaps here that we need ask the inevitable: Was YHWH himself at

¹²⁹ Mitchell, Smith and Bewer, *Malachi*, 80, Petersen, *Malachi*, 225.

¹³⁰ G. A. F. Knight, *Isaiah 56-66: The New Israel*. ITC. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmanns, 1985), 42,(I owe this reference to Hill, *Malachi*, 350)

¹³¹ Kyle P. McCarter, *II Samuel* (AB 9; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 484.

¹³² “A Hymn to Amon-Re,” translated by John A. Wilson (*ANET*, 365 (iii)).

¹³³ Introduction to “A Hymn to Amon-Re,” translated by John A. Wilson (*ANET*, 365).

¹³⁴ *ANEP*, 141-143 (405, 408, 409, 411). Note how the beams are portrayed as arms.

times regarded as the sun? Surely the Trito-Isaian passages of 58:8,10; 59:19; 60:1-3 and many others would confirm that YHWH was described employing solar imagery, but how far did this go? Ps 84:12 is quite concrete in its description of YHWH as sun (שמש) and shield (וּמִנִּי) (see ch. 2.b.i), but to go further than to *imagery* would perhaps not take these passages, including Mal 3:20, seriously. It seems, however, that older theophany would go to greater lengths in portraying the coming of YHWH in accord with solar characteristics. The problem with the majority of these passages is the very same correlation with other meteorological phenomena like thunder and rain. As such the profile of the common weather god to a greater degree fits YHWH. However, in seeing the solar attributes and correlation with righteousness one may easily be inclined to see here a composite image of a storm god appropriating solar imagery, such as Marduk.¹³⁵ Solar exclusivity such as here in v20 is rarely attested, but the few instances do not immediately authorize the perception of YHWH as a solar deity. The mentioned, iconographic background of the *winged sun disk* may also contribute to a possible background for the image conveyed through v20. As Hill points out, the “overshadowing” capacity of the wings (see the Psalmic references above) “ensured the protective presence of the deity for (...) all those under the shadow of the emblem”.¹³⁶

v20b – Wellbeing described

The second stanza is introduced with the frequent verb יָצָא. It occurs here in the second person plural, and refers directly to the same audience as in the first stanza. Those for whom the sun of righteousness has risen, will now *go out*. Not only that, they will *bounce about* (וּפִשְׁתֶּם), a consecutive form following and adverbially describing the manner of the going out. Further the bouncing is likened to that of calves (probably newly released) from the stall.

Interestingly, the word for “stall”, מַרְבֵּק, simply means “tying-place”, a cognate of a root meaning to “tie fast”. The word is applied only four times in the HB, and in every instance it is coupled with mention of the calf. This is a quite clear indication of a Hebrew idiom. In our verse it is the behavior of the calf that meets the spotlight. We picture a calf, newly released from the tying-place, as a happy beast as it is bouncing around. The metaphor seems about right: The righteousness of God has come to the

¹³⁵ “The Creation Epic,” translated by E. A. Speiser (*ANET*, 60-72 (Tablet I, lines 101f; VI:128f)).

¹³⁶ Hill, *Malachi*, 351f.

faithful, and pure joy should ensue. What better image then, than the euphoria of an animal just provided with freedom? The other occurrences provide some difficulties, however. Amos 6:4 speaks of an act of *eating* calves, and the BDB here points toward the fattening that was the point of keeping them in stalls. A second case is found in 1 Sam 28:24, where the necromancer offers Saul meat from a “stall-fed calf”¹³⁷. Presumably this idiom is one of luxurious food, or simply one that refers to the practice of tying up animals for the single purpose of becoming food one day. In this case, our context likens the joy of the faithful to the rare joy of animals such as this, finally being able to bounce about.¹³⁸ A final instance is found in Jer 46:21, where cowardly mercenaries of Egypt are compared to calves of the stall. This probably confirms our image of these animals as used to complacency in their world of continuous feeding and repose, yet in a slightly different manner. Petersen sees the image of the bouncing calf as one of fertility,¹³⁹ a notion I cannot follow at all. We will here stick to the more conventional idea of *joy*.

The focal point of this second stanza, then, is the metaphorical description of the wellbeing of the one whom YHWH favors. The metaphor is that of a newly released calf, accustomed to being tied up and longing for freedom in the fields. With the Jeremian pericope taken into account, there may be grounds for interpreting the condition of the calf as one of complacency and unhealthy passivity. It is tempting, seeing as the sin of Israel is one of inadequate services to YHWH. It sounds problematic to idealize the stall-fed calves, but the point of the entire verse is to set the faithful free. Perhaps, then, it is a fitting image of the faithful: Tied up by man-made shackles and freed by the sun of righteousness dawning upon them.

Summary

The prophetic activity of Malachi exhorted the wicked and unfaithful to fear the name of YHWH. For the “name-fearers”, the faithful, YHWH will make a sun of righteousness rise with healing in its wings, to bring about a joy compared to that of a newly released calf. The sun is, of course, important in all its respects. In our verse it is a sun, specifically one of *righteousness*, exclusively for the faithful. But it is *the* sun in the respect that it alludes to YHWH, whose righteous acts of salvation will be

¹³⁷ Here indebted to the JPS translation.

¹³⁸ Cf. the slightly different Hill, *Malachi*, 353.

¹³⁹ Petersen, *Malachi*, 226.

available to the righteous followers. The promises of YHWH are not to be belittled. His justice, truth and whatever else may be inherent in the term will come to the aid of the believer. What YHWH is promising, is a redemptive, healing act in which the imagery of light is utilized in much the same way as Isa 58:8.

The verse is dense with hermeneutical possibilities, but I feel as if our conclusions here are played on the safe side. There is no doubt that talk of a "sun of righteousness" and mention of wings will bring to mind quite a lot of mythological Near Eastern parallels. The sun disc in particular becomes very interesting as in this time and place of Hebrew religion such an image brings to mind disturbing amounts of alien cultism. As a prime example the variants of the winged sun disk come to mind, and the similarity is striking. Why and how would such imagery be applied to a deity that in Hebrew biblical tradition requires the sole attention of his followers? This and other questions are brought up further later on.

iv. Summary of the main analyses

The three passages chosen for analysis provide, as we have seen, more than sufficient evidence for a kind of imagery presenting the god of Israel, YHWH, as likened to the sun. The imagery employed varies slightly in the three. Isa 58:8 articulates, to an extent, the majority of the motifs I now set out to discuss. The passage of Isa 60:1-3 emphasizes the *luminous* characteristics, while Malachi 3:20 focuses primarily on the *healing* properties. Thematically the concepts of *righteousness/justice*, the *glory* of YHWH, *healing*, and most importantly the *solar* depiction of YHWH are covered. The three pericopae converge in having the very same message to the believer: *YHWH is coming to save*. This seemingly interwoven grid of tightly corresponding themes is no inevitable or obvious relationship of biblical thematic. As we will soon see, the themes do occur together elsewhere, and it is from this evidence that we may draw conclusions of historical/cultural interrelation of the concepts.

The question posed in the beginning of the exegetical section is not an easy one to answer. My conclusions after the walkthrough of Isa 58:8, 60:1-3 and Mal 3:20 hold that there is no doubt that solar imagery is employed regarding the deity. YHWH is definitely likened to the sun and its capacities in many regards. There are many plausible explanations for the use of such terminology, but the first question raised

should perhaps be whether or not such language might be problematic to an otherwise strict monotheism strongly opposed to any sort of syncretism. We are well aware that the Near Eastern pantheons (like archaic religion in general) all had their variation of a solar deity. Why risk the identification of YHWH with alien divine credentials that Israelite tradition for so long (supposedly) sought to undermine?

If, however, phrases such as “the light of Israel” and others point to an originally Yahwistic notion of a solar god of Israel, then we are confronted with a quite delicate matter that is difficult to approach. Many (in present scholarship, the notable Mark S. Smith, among others) have sought to find the “original YHWH” in various obscure characters of storm, steppe or wilderness gods, and certainly the solar deity is no exception. Such a deduction, however, cannot presently be made. This understanding would facilitate the notion of an evolved Yahwism (with a severely mitigated solar perception, perhaps), moderated to a religion with more applicable, obscuring ways of referring to God. We will now turn to other passages of the HB that might elucidate these matters.

2.b. The sun in the Hebrew Bible

Like the analysis texts, many other parts of the canon attest to solar imagery attributed to the god of Israel. Additionally, many Hebrew Biblical passages attest in some way to worship of the sun or a personified solar deity. Some passages merely hints at it and others are quite concrete in its reference. Of course, in this respect not all passages containing the Hebrew word for “sun” (שֶׁמֶשׁ) are interesting. Neither, of course, can the passages be limited to such mention. Distinction between a common noun (the sun) and the personified proper name (the solar deity) is not always an easy task in the ancient writings. Notwithstanding, there are plenty of terms to go around when looking for “solar language”. Examples of this are words pointing to specific solar abilities or characteristics like shining or rising/ascending. In cases such as these it is important to do thorough concordance research, so as to discover how a word is employed in different circumstances. Having this in mind, I will do my best to show how the given texts relate to what I call “solar imagery”, or “solar language”. The selection of text units ranges from narrative to prophetic to poetical pericopae, and thus demonstrates both temporal and thematic diversity.

No claim is made here to include all passages of “solar language”, even if this

were an undisputed, concrete category. I have included the ones that most probably or seemingly display such “solar language”, and discussed its content. The passages I deem “solar language” are one out of two: Veneration or portrayal of YHWH with solar undertones (part i), or polemic against veneration of the sun (part ii). It goes without saying that a text referencing veneration of the sun is not necessarily in support of it. Rather often the context is polemical against the practice, but there are also encounters where the God of Israel is implied utilizing such imagery or description. Cases such as these exist as narrative, poetry, prophecy and other genres or circumstances, like the names of places or people. Our case here is to research the meaning or history behind the given terminology in the given context, with emphasis on how such phrasing could be employed in a supposedly strict monolatrous society. This question, and other posed along the way, seeks to understand the significance of solar imagery to HB theology. In this respect we wonder about intent and motivation. Neither theologically nor historically is identifying the God of Israel with the sun a small matter. Naturally, there are conceptual questions arising too, regarding how the identification is to be understood: Personification, hypostatization, or mere imagery without undertones. A third way to detect solar imagery is the prospective existence of names pointing to either YHWH as sun or with solar capacity (part iii). These few cases are commented on lastly in this subchapter. Two excursi form yet two subchapters (parts iv and v) to treat two relevant tendencies in HB theology. Among the most important acknowledgments to be had in this regard is the fact that answering all these questions with certainty is impossible. There can only be speculation. Of course there are such things as good and bad speculation. Hence, I will do my best to make this part of the dissertation based upon conventional HB theology and sober assumptions.

As an important object of the thesis is the historical *background* of the imagery; I discuss the potential cultural origin of passages as we move along. It is my opinion that the history of religions discussion is best commented upon on in the process, rather than crammed into one chapter. Over the last century and a half there has been a tremendous amount of research on the field that literally crosses the borders between the research of ancient Israel/Palestine and the neighboring “Near Eastern” world. The different disciplines of archaeology, history of religions and the theologies of Christianity and Judaism converge in this vast area that no fitting noun or adjective may contain properly; an area and with themes that encompass such

enormous proportions of literature and art that the narrowing down is imperative to accurately write a thesis such as this. The following passages are treated in the order of the BHS, starting with the cases of the Pentateuch.

i. Solar imagery attested in the Hebrew Bible

Deuteronomy 33:2

¹⁴² *He said: "YHWH came from Sinai, and he ascended upon us¹⁴⁰ from Seir, he beamed¹⁴¹ forth from Mount Paran. He came from Ribebboth-kodesh¹⁴² with fire, law¹⁴³, issued unto us from his right hand."*

What is frequently referred to as language pertaining to YHWH as a "Divine Warrior",¹⁴⁴ introduces this penultimate chapter of Deuteronomy. The verse, at first glance, contains a threefold geographical designation concerning YHWH. The military aspect, however, is an element clear to us from the imagery employed; YHWH approaches, with fire from his right hand. Another kind of imagery, however, is even more prominent: Solar characteristics.

The fourfold designation of YHWH's movements employs four different verbs to portray the manner of his coming. At first, he simply "came" (בֵּיאַ) (from Sinai), secondly he "ascended" (יָרַד) (from Seir), he "beamed forth" (יָצַע) (from Mount Paran) and finally "came" (אָתַתָּה) (from Ribebboth-kodesh). The first verb is one of the more common verbs of the HB, while of the second we have established an almost exclusive usage in solar circumstances. Smith, by reason of this verb, deems the passage "solar language".¹⁴⁵ The third, יָצַע, is never used of the sun in the HB. Rather it is used five out of eight times to describe an action or characteristics of YHWH.¹⁴⁶ In the Psalmic instances and this one the verb is theophanically employed to describe the physical appearance of YHWH.¹⁴⁷ However, as the root is not plentifully

¹⁴⁰ I follow here the NRSV in the understanding of לָבוֹא. Cf. JPS, translating "them".

¹⁴¹ Tigay, Jeffrey H., *Deuteronomy* (JPSTC; Philadelphia: JPS, 1996), 320.

¹⁴² Keeping here with the JPS translation.

¹⁴³ With all humility I suggest this rendering. I believe both "fire" and "law" to be a part of the message conveyed, with the latter as a kind of explanatory gloss (as the theme is taken up in vv3f. v4: תּוֹרָה), but I will not discuss it further here.

¹⁴⁴ Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 388.

¹⁴⁵ Smith, "The Near Eastern Background," 31.

¹⁴⁶ Pss 50:2; 80:2; 94:1; Job 10:3; 37:15.

¹⁴⁷ C. Barth, "יָצַע," *TDOT* VI:220-225 (224).

attested to, there may easily be cast doubts on the intention of the verb. Later instances, particularly in Qumran, attest to figurative use of spiritual matters, or as “appear”, “come forth” or the like.¹⁴⁸ This sole case of Deuteronomic use is only slight evidence to solar terminology, but in the company of זָרַח I maintain that 33:2 carries with it a tendency from what is probably ancient theological material.¹⁴⁹ The fourth verb has nothing very particular about it, other than its proclivity to carry abstract phenomena as subjects.¹⁵⁰ The passage may possibly be a witness to an early solar rendering of the YHWH of the Sinai tradition, additionally linked to the wasteland¹⁵¹ of Seir and the mountain of Paran. Tigay, in his contribution to the *JPS Torah Commentary* series, notes that an Egyptian inscription (dating to the 14th century BCE) testifies to a place nearby the Sinai area under the following designation: “land of the nomads, Yahwe”¹⁵².¹⁵³ However exiting, the space allotted does not allow for taking the geographical investigation further on this point. Of special interest to us is the parallel in Hab 3:3f, which also connects Teman and Paran to theophany and light imagery.

As Tigay also notes, the depiction of deities as shining or radiant is not unfamiliar in the ancient Near East,¹⁵⁴ and certainly not unfamiliar concerning YHWH. The rendering of theophanies follow a familiar HB pattern, with phenomena strongly connected to light, fire and extreme (yet natural) meteorological or tectonic phenomena. Occurrences such as these are represented in the Psalms¹⁵⁵ and the prophets¹⁵⁶. To us the most important militant image is the protective strophe of Isa 58:8bβ, wherein we saw YHWH act as both front- and rearward. Interestingly, the כְּבוֹד and the צִדֵק both act as qualities by which YHWH protectively is present. We may safely presume that the imagery employed rests on tradition mounted in Hebrew as well as common Semitic or Near Eastern ancient lore. The fire of the last part of the verse contribute to the understanding of YHWH’s “dawning” as something

¹⁴⁸ Barth, *TDOT* VI:221-223.

¹⁴⁹ Mark S. Smith, ““Seeing God” in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible,” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 171-183. 176.

¹⁵⁰ Isa 21:12; 41:5,23; 44:7; 45:11; Mic 4:8; Prov 1:27; Job 3:25; 16:22; 37:22.

¹⁵¹ See the reference to the steppes of Edom in the similar Judg 5:4.

¹⁵² Shmuel Ahituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents*, 122 (note 295).

¹⁵³ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 319.

¹⁵⁴ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 319f.

¹⁵⁵ Pss 18:8-16; 29:7-10; 50:3; 68:8f; 97:3-5.

¹⁵⁶ Isa 6:3f; Hab 3:3ff; Mic 1:3-4.

spectacular, not to say violent.¹⁵⁷ After all, the imagery does corroborate other passages giving testimony to the “divine warrior”.

“Fire” does not stand alone, however, as “law” (דָּת) accompanies the term.¹⁵⁸ Fire is frequently appearing as an ingredient of YHWH’s appearance.¹⁵⁹ In this verse it is described as going forth from YHWH’s right hand. Here may be a connection between a dawning deity and his issued decrees, subsequently referred to as תּוֹרָה. Smith suggests that the “light of Torah”,¹⁶⁰ a concept stumbled upon in the HB (see Ps 19:2-7(8-15) below) is a development of the sun as no longer part of the pantheon (as in “Ugaritic texts and early Israel”), but “transmuted” into an image of divinely commissioned law.¹⁶¹ With the additional mention of a king in Deut 33:5, the passage perhaps suggests that legislation is divine, but is royally ratified on earth, as the king is the deity’s foremost mortal instrument. Others, however, would argue that mention of the king refers to YHWH himself,¹⁶² as a surviving premonarchic inclination towards total theocracy. Ps 97 ascribes kingship to YHWH, and never mentions a human king. Nevertheless, 2 Sam 23:3-4 (treated below) is of great importance in this respect, and indeed the connection to the kingship of YHWH in Ps 97 will prove as an ideal model for an earthly protégé.

2 Samuel 23:3-4

“³ The God of Israel has spoken; to me the rock of Israel said: “One ruling righteously over men, ruling in fear of God, ⁴ is like the morning light, the rising sun on a morning without clouds; shining from the rain on the grassy land.”¹⁶³”

2 Sam 23:3-4 is a very important passage of the Hebrew Bible. Not only is the origin probably very old, but the words carry a particular weight because of whom they are spoken and the situation in which they were uttered. These are, supposedly, the last

¹⁵⁷ Cf. particularly the similar Hab 3; Ps 18:8-16 (|| 2 Sam 22:8-16); 29:7-9.

¹⁵⁸ See footnote above on translation.

¹⁵⁹ Ps 29:7; Hab 3; Exod 13:21; 19:18; Deut 4:15; 5:4,21-23.

¹⁶⁰ Intriguingly, the famous Ps 119:105 calls the word of YHWH a lamp (נֵר) to “my feet”.

¹⁶¹ Smith, *The Memoirs of God*, 98f.

¹⁶² Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12* (WBC 6B; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 837f; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 389 (arguing that commonly the divine warrior is given a kingdom); cf. however, the disagreeing Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: a Commentary* (trans. Dorothea Barton; OTL; Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1966), 205.

¹⁶³ In v4bβ I am indebted to the NRSV, which presents a very suitable rendering of a difficult strophe: “gleaming from the rain on the grassy land”.

words of David, king of a united Israel. The words represent the ideal king of Israel, ruling on the model of David as a sort of proto-king. Not only that: David puts these words in the mouth of the God of Israel, hence it becomes a *divinely ordained*, not to say *sacred office*.

The commission given by David to the future king(s) is not a very advanced or unusual instruction. It is simply figurative language comparing the righteous, God-fearing ruler to the morning light. Being *righteous* (צדיק) and having *fear of God* (אלהים יראת) are both concepts we know from elsewhere. Righteousness is an important theme in Isa 58:8 and Mal 3:20, while the fear of YHWH¹⁶⁴ is present only in the latter (see the analysis of Mal 3:20 on the *fear*). It is an old theme, however, that is frequently found in both the HB and ANE religion.¹⁶⁵ The themes converge elsewhere in e.g. Ps 19:10, where the justice (משפט) of YHWH is righteous, set parallel to the “everlasting” (עד) fear of YHWH. The most concrete parallel, however, should be Ps 72:1-7,¹⁶⁶ wherein vv1-3 the king rules with righteousness¹⁶⁷ given to him by God. In v4, the first concrete examples of how this rule will be enforced are about helping the poor and oppressed. In v5 a wish is made that the king is to have a long life, indeed as long as the sun and moon shines. Then, in vv6f, there is a correlation between the king's righteousness and rain provided for fields, representing something direly needed (perhaps particularly in this part of the world) for all agricultural aspects. Similarly, and drawing on the same traditions, there is also the prophecy of Isa 11, regarding another king in the line of Jesse. Isa 11:4, in turn, is strongly reminiscent of Ps 72:4, as they are both about a king ruling (שפט)¹⁶⁸ with a righteous (צדיק) character. McCarter insists, to my disagreement, that “sun” is a royal title like in the Hittite and Egyptian traditions (see the above analysis of Mal 3:20, however, for his intriguing parallel to an Egyptian sun hymn).¹⁶⁹ Like Anderson¹⁷⁰ I find no good reason to support this claim. His rendering of Ps 84:12: “sun and suzerain”,¹⁷¹ and understanding of Mal 3:20 “Rightful sun” as a coming king makes it hard to follow his

¹⁶⁴ Concretely: יראי שמי, “*he who fears my name*”.

¹⁶⁵ Fuhs, *TDOT* VI:297f.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. also Jer 33:20; Ps 89:37f.

¹⁶⁷ צדיק (v2), צדקה (vv1,3) and like here, צדיק (v7) but see the Mal 3:20 analysis for more on the term.

¹⁶⁸ In 2 Sam 23:3, however: מושל.

¹⁶⁹ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 484.

¹⁷⁰ Arnold A. Anderson, *Samuel 2* (WBC 11; Waco: Word Books, 1989), 269.

¹⁷¹ My translation below: “*a sun and a shield*”.

argumentation.¹⁷²

As a definite connection between the themes is established, the most important of links is perhaps found in the solar imagery so vividly displayed in this pericope. Surveyed in chapter 3 is the connection between the sun and the concept of righteousness, a prevalent notion in ANE religion. Strongly tied to these concepts is the monarchic institution as well,¹⁷³ and here is the clearest display of the tight connection to kingship as a divinely ordained office in the HB. The primary image of the righteous king in Israel is the *morning light* (אור בקר), the *rising sun* (זרח־שמש) *on a morning without clouds* (בקר לא עבות), *shining* (ננה) from the reflection on wet grass. The imagery conveyed here goes from the top of the heavens to the grass on the ground. Effectively through figurative language the passage encourages the addressee to view the king as the sun or sunlight itself.¹⁷⁴

It is tempting to study the previous chapter, 2 Sam 22 in consideration of this imagery, as the violent theophany of vv8-16 describes YHWH differently, albeit in similar terms: He is surrounded by heavy darkness (22:10, ערפל), thick cloud (22:12: עבי שחקים, see 23:4bα) yet in front of him there is shine (22:13: ננה, see 23:4bβ), and later, in v29, David declares YHWH to be his lamp (נר), shining (ננה, same root as above) in his darkness. Very probably this shares a background with 1 Kgs 8:12 (cf. the apparatus in the BHS), whose very peculiar phrasing compares the sun to YHWH and places him in heavy darkness (ערפל). The same wording is used in 2 Sam 22:10 and Ps 97:2, the latter in which righteousness (צדק) and justice (משפט) make out the foundation of YHWH's throne. Consider also later in Ps 97:11, where light (אור) dawns¹⁷⁵ (זרח) for the righteous (לצדיק). When seeing how these themes astonishingly converge, one cannot help think that some specific old tradition lies behind kingship

¹⁷² McCarter, *II Samuel*, 484.

¹⁷³ Anderson, *Samuel 2*, 269.

¹⁷⁴ According to McCarter, however, the figurative language has the *grassy land* as its focal point, and he believes the righteous rule to be comparable to sunbeams, which make grass grow (McCarter, *II Samuel*, 481-484). This would find correspondence with such passages as Ps 72:6 and Isa 45:8 (Cf. also Pss 65:9-14; 67:7; 85:11-13), but he renders the verse differently. In contrasting the newly grown grass ("the loyal subjects of the king") of v4 to the worthless compared to thorns (קיץ) of v6, he finds a parallel to the righteous name-fearers of Mal 3:20 and the arrogant and evildoers likened to chaff in 3:19 (McCarter, *II Samuel*, 481). I do not see the same strong connection as McCarter does, however (not to mention that I disagree with his rendering). Mal 3:19 might well know the traditions of 2 Sam and even build on them, but the post-exilic setting is far removed temporally and well established on its own premises as the "Day of YHWH". It seems, however, somewhat forced when he sees the royal sun of 2 Sam 22 and the sun of righteousness in Mal 3:20 to effectuate this burning as a contrast to making things grow.

¹⁷⁵ Reading זרח instead of זרע, cf. the BHS apparatus and Ps 112:4.

in the HB: In his divinely ordained office, the Israelite king was to rule in righteousness following the divine example, startlingly influenced by solar imagery. It needs however, be noted that the connection between chapters 22 and 23 is not as clear as I would like it to be. They are separated textually by a setumah, and are removed from each other in both form and setting. There can be no doubt, however, that the righteousness of the king in 2 Sam 23 follows the same principles as those of YHWH as king in Ps 97.¹⁷⁶

This passage additionally reveals affinities with ancient Near Eastern material. The *Codex Hammurabi* (treated in chapter 3.a.ii) is presented as words of an ideal king, divinely commissioned to “rise like the sun” over the people.¹⁷⁷ I will treat this further on, in chapter 3 (a.ii).

Psalm 19:2-7

“² The heavens are recounting the glory of God¹⁷⁸, and the expanse tells of the work of His hand. ³ From a day unto the next day speech floods forth, and from a night unto the next night knowledge is declared. ⁴ No speech, no words. No voice of theirs is heard. ⁵ Yet¹⁷⁹ their sound¹⁸⁰ has gone out to the entirety of the earth, and their tongue to the end of the world. He has set a tent among them unto the sun, ⁶ which like a bridegroom advances from his quarters¹⁸¹, like an athlete rejoicing to run a course. ⁷ Its going forth is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit above their ends. Nothing is hidden from its heat.”

This very poetical psalm invokes the heavens as the first-hand witness to God's כבוד, setting it parallel to the “work of his hand”. This witness, however, has no audible speech or words. Presented somewhat mysteriously, it is indicated that their message still gets through, and it seems obvious that their witness is inherent as their grandeur is a “silent voice” giving testimony to the glory of God. Now we are told of the sun's tent which God has set up in the heavens, and the psalm employs here an

¹⁷⁶ Cf. also Pss 50:1-6; 76:5-10; 84:12 (all below).

¹⁷⁷ “The Code of Hammurabi,” translated by Theophile J. Meek (*ANET*, 163-180 (164)).

¹⁷⁸ כָּסָא.

¹⁷⁹ Understanding here an implicit contrast to the previous, like NRSV, NLT, NBK.

¹⁸⁰ Reading here like the LXX (φθόγγος), in concord with BDB (8462) 876 which suggests to read קָלָה.

¹⁸¹ This is my attempt to both capture the imagery of the bridegroom and the personified sun. Others: “chamber” (NAS, RSV, JPS); “canopy” (NRSV); LXX: παστός, = bridal chamber (LSJ 1346).

“image within an image”: The sun is *like a bridegroom* advancing from his bridal chamber, who *like an athlete* rejoices to run a course. The circuit of the sun (or, its “course”) encompasses all of heaven, and nothing can hide from it. These seven first verses comprise the first part of the psalm, apparently of a different focus than the rest, which concern the moral aptitude of the believer. Vv8-15 are basically about keeping the commandments and the law (תורה) of YHWH.

This first part of the psalm has a clear focus on praising God, who in this psalm is designated as אֱלֹהִים. What is specific in this psalm, however, is the manner of which he is praised. The heavens give testimony to his glory (כבוד), apparently just by being visible. The use of the term “expanse” (רקיע) allows for clear correlation with Genesis’ creation account, as it is rarely used in the HB.¹⁸² This is further underscored by the mention of “the work of his hand”. The glory that the expanse bears witness to, then, I am inclined to see as the celestial objects put on it by God in the creation narrative. This is confirmed as the sun enters in as one particularly commended by God. The pitching of a tent signifies this special treatment given to the one to whom none of earthly matters are hidden. We are reminded of the Ecclesiastian, resonating idiom “under the sun”, which pertains to the public, “out in the open” matters. This psalm has a definite mention of the common sun; probably no imagery or allusion is intended. However, the figurative language likens the sun to both a *bridegroom* and an *athlete*,¹⁸³ imagery of joy and vigor. The rest of the psalm, which is not included here, is focused on the law of YHWH. Both theme and imagery change, so the two parts of the psalm are incongruous apart from as to objective: Praising the deity. V10 acclaims the fear of YHWH (יראת יהוה) to be pure, and the justice (משפט) of YHWH to be righteous (צדק). As such it is possibly a Deuteronomistic or later legalistic redactional addition. In a side note, the portrayal of the sun as an athlete provides an exciting parallel to the narrative of Judg 14-16, wherein Samson (“man of the sun”¹⁸⁴, “little sun”¹⁸⁵ or “sunny”¹⁸⁶) is the main character (see 2.b.iii).

A key aspect in this psalm is how the sun’s abode or *tent* is given to it by God.

¹⁸² Nine times outside the creation account, and three other cases of the verb stem רקע.

¹⁸³ NIV: “champion”; NRSV, JPS, NAS: “strong man”.

¹⁸⁴ Robert G. Boling, *Judges* (AB 6A; New York: Doubleday, 1974), 225.

¹⁸⁵ Edward Lipiński, “Shemesh שמש,” *DDD* 764-768 (765).

¹⁸⁶ John Day, “Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan,” in *Ein Gott allein?: JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (ed. Walter Dietrich and Martin A. Klopfenstein; OBO 139; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 181-196 (190).

This effectively positions the sun beneath God in rank, further emphasizing the point already made: The sun is part of creation and acts on divine behest. Its authority is vast and all-encompassing, but as part of creation gives testimony to God's greatness. This is also emphasized by Kraus and others, as it thus provides an antithesis to an otherwise autonomous solar deity.¹⁸⁷

The two parts of the psalm are probably historic-critically seen best apart from each other.¹⁸⁸ However, it is very tempting to think that a post-exilic editor has put the two together in order to correlate the sun of God and the law of God.¹⁸⁹ Here can only be speculation. We may anyhow deduce that no solar affinity is given God himself here, but instead his law. It is tempting to directly associate the sun to the כבוד of YHWH, in light of the apparent solar aspects tied to that term elsewhere (see 2.b.v). This would not do justice to the psalm, which is clear in its disassociation of God and sun. Of course there is the possibility that the "original" Ps 19 was a solar hymn, but this we cannot know. Very possibly, the psalm is the direct opposite of a solar perception of the god of the Hebrews; perhaps it is an attempt at straightforward polemic towards solar cultism.¹⁹⁰ In regarding v10, we are quickly reminded of Mal 3:20, where the "sun of righteousness" will rise for those who fear YHWH. As these themes converge, I would think that perhaps Malachi's and the psalmist's sun is set to be an image of the steadfast נדק and מושפט (v10) of YHWH, which sees everything. Terrien states that "the sun's rays become the symbol of divine justice",¹⁹¹ and the imagery is fitting. From here the way is short to the imagery of Near Eastern gods of sun and righteousness (see chapter 3).

Most importantly it needs be kept in mind that the sun is not revered here, YHWH is. Some¹⁹² suggest a Canaanite background for the psalm, based on the name of the deity (אל). Thus it hints at a possible local background for the solar imagery, but no certainty may be given to this notion. In this regard, there is a remarkable inscription on a wall in Kuntillet 'Ajrud, giving solar characteristics to El

¹⁸⁷ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 272; Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmanns, 2003), 211.

¹⁸⁸ Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 268f; Peter Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1-50* (2nd ed; Word Biblical Commentary 19. Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 179f; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I, 1-50* (AB 16; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 121.

¹⁸⁹ Terrien, *The Psalms*, 208, 214f believes the two are interdependent on the basis of structure and theme.

¹⁹⁰ Terrien, *The Psalms*, 211 agrees.

¹⁹¹ Terrien, *The Psalms*, 212.

¹⁹² Terrien, *The Psalms*, 210; Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 270; cf. Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 179f, who sees all evidence as ambiguous.

(see 3.b.iii).¹⁹³ Craigie and others, however, discusses the influence of the Babylonian Shamash, particularly on v7c,¹⁹⁴ while Dahood gives particular attention to the Canaanite Shapash. In support of the Babylonian notion, we might mention the “Psalm to Marduk” where Shamash is called “the hero”,¹⁹⁵ and even the case of Samson. We should here probably stick to the common notion of an omniscient sun, as any concrete background seems lost to us. Near Eastern imagery is more than plausible. However, as it stands, Ps 19 correlates the תורה of God, and not God himself, to the sun on its course; the work of his hand.

Psalm 47:6

“⁶ God has ascended to a shout of joy, YHWH to the blast of a trumpet.”

This verse, introducing the second of the two parts of Ps 47, perhaps reveals some of the *sitz* of this short hymn: a morning service of sorts. I will soon move on to this. Ps 47 is famously claimed by Mowinckel to be one of many *enthronement psalms*,¹⁹⁶ obviously from the quite particular phrasing of v9. In this verse the enthroned deity is the center, receiving praise from the attendees. Every colon of the entire psalm, apart from the descriptive v6a either concretely encourages or gives a reason for the extolment of YHWH. The reasoning is focused on the kingship of YHWH, and that his reign is global (v3). Much like Ps 110:1, YHWH puts the nations under the feet of the attending subjects (v4). Additionally there are elements of election theology (vv5,10).

It is a short verse, and standing alone it might seem a tendentious display on my part. I will consider the setting briefly here. The context is one of praise, and celebrates the kingship of YHWH, enthroned in his temple. The verb employed to designate the ascension of God (עלה, also v10) is not one that is very frequently employed with the deity (except in the plentifully attested hiphil, where the deity is the cause of the ‘going up’, in the sense of ‘leading’),¹⁹⁷ but is very often employed as a

¹⁹³ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 245.

¹⁹⁴ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 180; Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, “Psalms: Introduction and Annotations” in *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1280-1446 (1302f); Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 272f, who further notes that Israelite traditions regarding the sun are “without doubt very old”.

¹⁹⁵ “Psalm to Marduk,” translated by Ferris J. Stephens (*ANET*, 389f).

¹⁹⁶ Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien II* (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1922), 3.

¹⁹⁷ Gen 17:22; 35:13; Exod 33:3,5; 1 Sam 6:20; Ezek 11:23 (of the כבוד); Pss 68:19; 97:9.

general term for pilgrimage or travel to Jerusalem/Zion. Because of what we have seen in the ANE relation between the sun and kingship, it would be an interesting connection indeed.

As I have briefly commented already, the original setting for this scene might have been a morning service. I will not go further in analyzing Mowinckel's findings, either, but rather see v6 in the light of our investigation: May solar features be traced in this short colon? Morgenstern was an avid supporter of a solar understanding of this verse. According to him, the verse describes a ritual act of the equinoctial New Year's Day: As the trumpet blasted, the solar YHWH rose at daybreak "above the Mount of Olives and its first rays shone in through the open eastern gate of the Temple".¹⁹⁸ He goes on to relate the rays through the gate with the כבוד of Ezek 43:1-4 (see 2.b.v). These are thought-provoking notions, but it is not unproblematic to say that the god of Israel was revered in this way. However, the vocabulary and wording seems unmistakable the way the imagery is construed. Nevertheless, Even if the verb in question evoked connotations of ascension and movement upwards, it seems as if the sun's movements were described using a different set of words, of which זרח, יצא and even בוא are important examples. The sense of the deity "going up" seems as if is meant purely as geographical movement, exemplified in this passage by the "climbing" of a hill like Zion. An important problem in this regard is that עלה, the verb in question, in not a single HB passage is used of the movement of the sun. No serious endeavor into this query could bypass a problem of such gravity. That one of the most common verbs of movement is not viable with the ascending of the sun is simply too much of a problem, in my opinion.

Craigie suggests that the "going up" or "ascension" is referring to the movement of the Holy Ark, and perhaps to Jerusalem (as discussed above).¹⁹⁹ I am inclined to think he is right, especially if we take the passage of 2 Sam 6:12-15 (cf. 1 Chr 15:28) into account. This solution sees the convergence of themes necessary to establish a proper connection: The movement upward, the shout of joy and the blowing of the *shofar*. In all probability this is what our psalm is aiming for: The return of God's presence to Jerusalem. This return, however is not solar like our analysis texts.

¹⁹⁸ Julian Morgenstern, "The King-God among the Western Semites and the Meaning of Epiphanes," VT 10/2 (1960): 138-197. 160.

¹⁹⁹ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 349.

Even if the verse seems somewhat “debunked” as solar imagery already, we should not bypass the fact that YHWH is in v3 called YHWH Elyon (יהוה עליון). This is an epithet known from Canaanite sources as the designation for El Elyon²⁰⁰, the chief deity of a general Canaanite pantheon (see ch. 3.a.iii).²⁰¹ It could be argued that the term is simply polemic in its ranging of YHWH as “higher” than all other nations’ deities (cf. Deut 32:8f, perhaps distinguishing between Elyon and YHWH. cf. also Ps 82). Nevertheless, this verse has proven to be a good example of a passage that would *seem* connected to solar imagery, as believed Morgenstern, but that simply tricks the modern reader because of the similarities to other “solar” passages.

Psalm 50:1-6

“¹ A psalm of Asaph. El, God YHWH, has spoken and called out the earth from the sunrise to the setting. ² From Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shone forth. ³ Our God approaches, and will not be silent. A consuming fire is before Him, and a forceful storm about Him. ⁴ He calls out the heavens above and the earth to judge His people: ⁵ “Gather unto me, my faithful ones, partakers of my covenant by sacrifice.” ⁶ So the heavens proclaim His righteousness, for God himself is judge. Selah.”

This liturgical²⁰² psalm, exhorting the believer to faithfulness in the setting of a lawsuit, takes the reader into the classical ancient courtroom scene. The speaking voice is that of YHWH, presented in the first Psalmic line as “El, God YHWH”. He is the one summoning witnesses to the court, who is making the suit and who is the presiding judge. The verses selected from the psalm represent a fourth of it, but constitutes a pericope in its own right. It introduces a speech by YHWH comprising the rest of the psalm. These selected verses, then, are not only particular in their calling to a lawsuit setting, but indeed carries the criteria of theophanic language. After the earth has been called out as a witness, God is described in his glorious (shining) approach to the scene. He is further described as having a consuming fire in front of him, and a forceful storm around him (Ps 97:3; Job 38:1). The next three verses are concrete lawsuit verses, as the heavens are now also called to the

²⁰⁰ Occurs four times (with the tetragrammaton) in the Gen 14 account, as well as Ps 78:35. *El Elyon*, on the other hand, is plentifully occurring in the HB.

²⁰¹ Day, John, “Yahweh and the Gods,” 182.

²⁰² Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 363.

witness stand. It is here also clear that the people is the one prosecuted, and the somewhat confusing designation to the human attendees “my faithful ones”, is added. The solution to this predicament is one out of two: Either the “faithful” are a group distinct from the ones being prosecuted, or it is simply a mocking designation of an immoral people. In the last case there is also the possibility that the ones who at least are sacrificing are keepers of the covenant in their faithful sacrifice, yet they need to be reprimanded for neglecting other legislation, exemplified in the rest of the psalm (slander, adultery, deceit, hypocrisy). God here summons and prosecutes, and he is also the judge of the scene. The heavens summoned in v4 testify to his righteousness, and honors him as judge in v6, thereby giving “the floor” to him as he starts his speech of v7.

The focal point of this small walkthrough of Ps 50:1-6 is, of course, the particularity of v2 – “*God has shone forth.*” The verb employed is יָצַח and is most often referring to shining as an act or undertaking of God.²⁰³ The most concrete parallel to this verse is found in Ps 94:1 (but cf. also Ps 80:2ff). This observation is made on the basis the notion of YHWH as a vindictive god with focus on the covenantal relationship and inclination towards military retaliation. The wording does not only focus on the physical appearance of YHWH, but also his errand as that of judgment. He approaches as a thunderous firestorm to act as judge, praised by the heavens as a patron of righteousness. He will contend against the people for their misbehavior. For more on the divine warrior-imagery, see Deut 33:2 and similar passages discussed above.

The previous mention (v1) of the sun's rising has lead Craigie to believe that the service wherein this liturgy was performed took place at dawn: “The first dazzling rays of sunrise on the eastern horizon signaled the advent of God”.²⁰⁴ This is a very interesting view. Even though I believe the phrase of v1 to be a geographical description (and not a temporal, as Craigie)²⁰⁵, the immediate introduction to God as shining or beaming seems intended. Imagery-wise, v1 supports as such v2. Yet v1 should be considered on its own, as the mention of the sunrise there mainly points toward the ubiquitous quality of the sun (and perhaps in turn, YHWH). As in Ps 19:7 the lesson learned is that nothing can hide from the sun on its journey. We do,

²⁰³ cf. Deut 33:2; Pss 80:2; 94:1; Job 10:3; 37:15.

²⁰⁴ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 364.

²⁰⁵ Craigie and Tate, *Psalms 1-50*, 364f.

however, find a parallel to v1 in Ps 113:3 and Mal 1:11 where the same phrasing may be found. There is nothing inherently solar about YHWH in v1 alone, and the parallels simply point to a “totality of geography”: Omnipresence. Having this in mind, it is hard to decide whether or not we should see v2 as completely separate from the message of v1. It *could*, however, solve the puzzle if there is some kind of contrast here: The sun is everywhere, while YHWH in taking solar imagery rests on Zion. Like in Isa 60:19f he resides there and eliminates the need for celestial light. Another important passage in this regard is Zech 14:4-9, in which YHWH comes to set his feet on the Mount of Olives and replaces ordinary sunlight as a “continuous day”²⁰⁶.²⁰⁷ Nonetheless, I find it hard to believe that the concept of an omnipresent sun correlated with that of judgment and righteousness is a coincidence. I would like to conclude that the verses are ingeniously put together to support the ancient notion of solar righteousness, but that v1 does not carry solar connotations on its own (like in Mal 1:11).

The semantics of the shining has been thoroughly dealt with above when treating Deut 33:2, so there is no need to justify it further as solar language. An interesting aspect, however, is the close parallel between the theophanic imagery and the tight connection to YHWH as judge in the scenario. His place as judge is given legitimacy by the heavens, which attest to his righteousness. Unsurprisingly, there is a correspondence or natural correlation between the quality of righteousness and the capacity to act as judge. Presented to us here is the court setting so typical of ancient Near Eastern texts and treaties, but the most interesting parallel to us in this case would be that of the solar connection to the quality of righteousness. As is frequently found in chapter 3, the solar deity is constantly one of righteousness and imposer of judgment. Does Ps 50 purport the commonly held view of Shamash or other solar deities' close affiliation with righteousness? To simply wrap it all up with a “yes” would be irresponsible in light of the one single word such a conclusion would rest on. The idea of YHWH approaching in splendid light is also closely tied to the other natural phenomena normally accompanying him in theophany, as also seen here in this pericope (fire and storm). I will, however, conclude that the court setting and the imagery is not coincidental in its correlation, and neither is the mention of the

²⁰⁶ Here indebted to the JPS translation.

²⁰⁷ Interestingly, this late theophany combines the apocalyptic notion of YHWH as king (see below) and as replacing the sun.

regular sun just before the splendor of God; to some degree the dawn, coming of judgment/righteousness and the approaching YHWH are corresponding themes.

Psalm 76:5-10

“⁵ Thou, the luminous One, the brilliant²⁰⁸ One from the mountains of prey. ⁶ The stout of heart are plundered, slumbering in their sleep [of death]. Of all men of war, none could lift their hands.²⁰⁹ ⁷ Because of Your reprimand, God of Jacob, charioteers and horses faint²¹⁰. ⁸ Thou, Thou glorious One! Who can stand before Your face when you are in your anger? ⁹ From the heavens You let Your judgment be heard, the earth stood in awe, silent, ¹⁰ as God stood up for justice, bringing salvation to the afflicted of the earth. Selah.”

Psalm 76 is also in the tradition of Mowinckel regarded as an enthronement psalm.²¹¹ Roughly speaking, this is a three-partite hymn to the militant and ever vigilant guardian of justice, the God of Jacob (v12: יהוה אלהיכם). The middle pericope, in which our verses of interest appear, borders on theophany as the deity is vividly described as a kind of anti-militant judge (important cosmological and tectonic characteristics lack, however). v4 introduces this theme by ascribing to God the destruction of various kinds of weaponry. It is this concept that comes full-blown in our pericope, particularly in vv6-8. A kind of court setting may be detected in vv9-10, wherein YHWH God is judge, savior of the “afflicted of the earth”. Of particular interest to this dissertation is vv5 and 9f, whereas the first reminds us solar divinities, and the latter two verses pertain to the concept of justice issued from heaven. The announcement of God’s justice from heaven causes earth to be silent.

It goes without saying that the luminosity of God as described by the niphal of אור, is a pure praise dedication to the deity. This is further emphasized by the following parallel sentence, though admittedly this “brilliant” is neither solar nor light-correlated in itself (אדיר). The enveloping of the deity in light is no strange concept to the religions of the Near East. However, again we find an example of particular light imagery followed by statements of the salvific and intervening action of God. It is in

²⁰⁸ Gosta W. Ahlström, “אדיר,” *TDOT* 1:73f.

²⁰⁹ Lit: “find their hands”, BDB (4672) 593.

²¹⁰ Possibly also a kind of “sleep of death”.

²¹¹ Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien II*, 4.

vv9f underscored that the origin of God's דין and משפט is the heavens, from whence God "let[s it] ... be heard"²¹². The silence of v9, שקט, is in Isa 32:17 directly correlated with the concept of righteousness, צדקה (however, in v9 is represented the related *justice*, משפט, as in Isa 58:2, cf. e.g. Ps 72:1f where the two are twinned). So even if this silence is tied to the awe or fear of the ones hearing it, the judgment heard from heaven immediately leads to righteousness on earth.

We are also reminded of the *Divine Warrior* again, and in this instance vv5 and 9f corresponds to Deut 33:2. The brilliant deity is in v5 described as coming from a mountain area, and issued from him are divine decrees. The contact points with Deut 33 are many. This tendency seems quite obvious, as the vindictive, saving god comes with his righteousness and judgment to slay the evildoers.

Not much more needs be said concerning these verses. In my opinion the semantics point toward a light-affiliated understanding of God, but it does not seem distinctively solar. The further mention of the judgment issued from heaven, however, leads me to believe that a solar understanding of the God of justice may be traced in the pericope. As such it would fit in firmly with the rest of the plentifully attested solar deity/justice-righteousness themes of the ancient Near East. In addition, the justice of God is the advent of salvation or redeeming to the "afflicted" that is the poor or oppressed. It is for these people that justice will prevail when God "stands up" in this court setting

Psalm 84:12

¹² *For a sun and a shield is YHWH God; favour and glory YHWH gives. He does not withhold good from those who walk in integrity."*

I have chosen not to include anything but than this verse in particular from the psalm, though it has its place in the third out of three *selah*-divided passages. Psalm 84 is traditionally acclaimed as a psalm of pilgrimage or exilic return, depicting a longing towards Zion and the temple in particular. To be sure, the hymnic characteristics are present, eagerly portraying the localities of Zion in a joyous manner. YHWH Sabaoth (alternatively, YHWH God of Hosts) is praised first for the temple altars (v4), wherein

²¹² השמעת (hiphil).

the birds are nesting. In the second passage he is encouraged to listen to prayer (v9) and in the last (v12) he is extolled for being a sun and a shield: A donor of favor and glory.

This verse is seldom overlooked whenever the prospective concept of solar Yahwism is discussed. The question is regularly brought up whether this account can be taken literally to support a solar understanding of YHWH. In support of this view is Smith, who deems a sun cult in Jerusalem to be “primarily an indigenous development”.²¹³ Certainly, no conclusive evidence is found in the passage, but it is the only HB incident where such a direct semantic link between יהוה and שמש is found. Even though we do not have a decisive verb of identification which in English renders the conjugations of “to be”, this our v12aα offers direct linkage between the deity and the qualities of “sun” (שמש) and “shield” (מגן). This is further substantiated, according to Smith, by v8, in the “seeing” of God and appearing before him.²¹⁴

The first question that needs be asked is in what manner YHWH is to be understood as שמש: In a literal sense, or as a kind of imagery? I believe that we with certainty may deduce that this is imagery in its plainest sense; *Solar* imagery, at that. Secondly, the question is in what way YHWH meets the imagery of solar quality. We do not in this psalm find any mention of neither shining nor warmth, and probably the depiction is instead either connected to its counterpart, *shield*, or their parallels, *favor* (חן) or *glory* (כבוד). The solar capacities have already been discussed at length, so I will not consider this further here. A shield, however, denotes a sense of protection and safety. The word is plentifully applied to YHWH in the Psalms, in most cases joined by phrasing related to divine refuge or aid.²¹⁵ v10a, awkwardly rendered by the JPS “O God, behold our shield”, should in my opinion rather be understood as “Our shield God, see (us and look upon the face of Your anointed).” If I am correct, then the “shield” is consequently used to signify the deity and how he is regarded by the believing community. Tate notes the possibility of even seeing שמש as an image of protection, warranted from the traditional translations of Isa 54:12.²¹⁶

The concept of *favor* in most cases goes along the lines of a deity being

²¹³ Smith, “The Near Eastern Background...”, 39.

²¹⁴ Smith, “The Near Eastern Background...”, 30f.

²¹⁵ Pss 18:3,31,36; 28:7; 33:20; 59:12; 115:9-11; 119:114; 144:2; BDB (4043) 171; Cf. also Pss 5:13; 91:4, where instead is employed צנה.

²¹⁶ שמשותך = pinnacles (NRS, RSV) or battlements (NAS). LXX employs ἐπάλλξεις, generally “battlements”.

generous and merciful towards men, very often translated as the complicated idea of *grace*.²¹⁷ *Glory* will be thoroughly treated later on (see chapter 2.b.v), and has solar connotations in the prophetic accounts of Ezekiel and Isaiah. Seen in the light of a solar כבוד it is tempting to draw lines to a solar theology: “God is sun and bestows his glory, *his rays*” or something of the kind. I find it much more plausible, however, that the psalmist employs a very common word in order to describe the favorable, salvific aptitude of YHWH, and the way in which he is present with his people. Thus I deem that a relation between the sun and the concept of כבוד (as solar symbolism) here is coincidental and requires no further attention.

Rather it seems certain that the imagery in a wholesome manner attempts to convey the idea of a protective deity, abundant in grace and present in his glory. These concepts are concomitant and seem to belong together in both a psalmistic and a wider, Hebrew biblical manner. Ps 84 seem to wholeheartedly express its trust in YHWH and his salvific properties. It is of interest to us, however, why the author chose to utilize and the later community chose to preserve the reference to the sun. Possible solutions include idioms unknown to us, or a given liturgical situation where the sun was e.g. at its dawning, its highest or its hottest. A connection or correlation we do know of is the ancient Near Eastern connection of a solar deity and the giving of righteousness, often occurring as salvific acts like in the Gilgamesh epic, with Dumuzi's escape (see chapter 3.a.ii). Certainly the verse does not propose that YHWH in a literal sense *is* the sun, in the same way that he is not a literal shield. Neither does it infer that some kind of equality between YHWH and the sun. Instead the strophe upholds the essence of the psalm: The protective, saving YHWH whom the community places its trust in.

Psalm 104:1-4

“¹ Bless, my soul, YHWH: “YHWH my God, how great you are! You are clothed in honor and majesty; ² wrapped in a robe of light. [You are] stretching out the heavens like a tent; ³ setting the beams of your quarters on the waters. [You are] having clouds as your chariot; striding on the wings of the wind. ⁴ The winds are made your messengers; fiery flame your ministers²¹⁸.”

²¹⁷ BDB (2580) 336.

²¹⁸ JPS, NAS, NRSV; cf. NIV, NLT “servants”.

Psalm 104:1-4 is by no means an independent pericope, but for the sake of brevity I have only selected these verses. Vv1f are included, obviously because of the light imagery, while the next vv3f sets the standard for the rest of the psalm in the inclusion of creation (and divine mastery of it) as a fitting argument for the appraisal of YHWH. This exactly is the psalm's intent, it seems. It embarks from a point where the self is encouraged to exalt YHWH God. Firstly, he is praised because of his greatness, and secondly he is described as clothed in majesty (הוד) and honor (הדר). V2 describes him as robed in light and extols him as the origin of the heavens, likening the act of creation to pitching a tent. Further included in v3, "the waters" are suitable for placing the "beams of your quarters". Further his mastery of the second element, wind, is emphasized as his vehicular prerogative. Lastly, the third element is recognized as YHWH's servants or ministers are "fiery flame". The rest of the psalm includes praise to YHWH for his *creatio continua*, in sustaining all parts of his work on earth. As such it is linked in particular to Ps 147.²¹⁹ The "wings of the wind" brings to mind the phrase from Mal 3:20 in the "sun of righteousness" with "healing in its wings".²²⁰ We will leave that particular aspect in this setting, as there is neither themes of healing nor righteousness included in this passage.

This psalm is included here due to its testimony to YHWH as being robed in light and the resulting association to a specifically celestial character. The image of the deity as being robed in light was frequently employed in the Near East. Due to this psalm's more than frequent references to creation, the closest parallel to our case would be Marduk. In similar fashion he "set up and ceiled it as sky" (the carcass of Tiamat) in the *Enuma Elish* (see the reference above, Gen 1:14-18). Marduk is similarly praised as the sun,²²¹ and upon the request to build him a temple, the EE states that "brightly glowed his features like the day"²²². These solar features, then, seems to be closely resemblant to what we also find in other HB passages (see above).²²³ Dahood, however, is inclined to see a Phoenician-mediated link to the

²¹⁹ Cf. also Pss 65; 67:7; 85:11-13; 136:25; 145:15f.

²²⁰ Or perhaps Ps 139:9.

²²¹ "The Creation Epic," (ANET, 60-72 (Tablet I, lines 101f; VI:128f)).

²²² "The Creation Epic," (ANET, 60-72 (Tablet V:56)).

²²³ As a side note, the sun and moon is mentioned in v19 as part of creation. Their function is of calendrical purposes, much like Marduk appoints the celestial bodies to their stations in the EE: "The Creation Epic," (ANET, 60-72 (Tablet V:1f, 12), 501 (V:45 and very likely preceding broken fragment)).

solar hymns of the Egyptians, and mentions in particular the Aten Hymn²²⁴.²²⁵ Kraus and Terrien agree, but both would emphasize a Phoenician-Canaanite influence rather than a direct Egyptian impact.²²⁶ The Aten Hymn is mentioned with good reason, as it is one of the clearest HB parallels to Egyptian material. Ps 104:19-30 seems to be taken from various parts of this hymn.²²⁷ It is of particular interest to us, since the object of the hymn is the monotheistic sun deity of Akhenaten's reign in 1364-1347 (1352-1336 BCE).²²⁸ A tendency in this new solar monotheism was the already mentioned concept of *creatio continua*.²²⁹ However, in vv19-24, where the parallels are, no concrete solar veneration remains. If the original Aten Hymn was known to the author, we can say without a doubt that the sun was not meant to be given any particular rank. If anything, YHWH took its place in the hymn without taking its characteristics. Like Kraus notes: "...in Psalm 104 the sun is a creature; it serves as a determinant of time."²³⁰

It needs be noted, however, that neither solar imagery nor correspondence with other contemporary religions were necessarily intended from the author. Whether similarity was intentional or not, the rest of the chapter anyhow undermines an understanding of creation as worth appraisal. That is: YHWH is in focus as the sustaining creator, not what he has created; the light in which he is wrapped is his own. Nevertheless, Egyptian influence may be evidenced here, and may explain the proclivity to portray YHWH with solar characteristics.

²²⁴ "The Hymn to the Aton," translated by John A. Wilson (*ANET*, 369-371).

²²⁵ Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I, 101-150* (AB 17A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 33; cf. Berlin and Brettler, "Psalms," 1397.

²²⁶ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; CC. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 298; Terrien, *The Psalms*, 716.

²²⁷ P. E. Dion, "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god: The Double Legacy of Egypt and Canaan as Reflected in Psalm 104", *ZAW* 103/1 (1991): 43-71 (61) (the texts are in p. 60 conveniently juxtaposed!).

²²⁸ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:195.

²²⁹ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 85f.

²³⁰ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 302.

ii. Solar worship opposed in the Hebrew Bible

Genesis 1:14-18

“¹⁴ And God said: “Let there be lights in the expanse²³¹ of the heavens to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs for appointed times, and for days and years. ¹⁵ And let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶ And God made the two great lights: The great light in dominion of the day, and the lesser light in dominion of the night, and the stars. ¹⁷ And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸ to dominate the day and the night and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.”

The very first mention of the sun in the Hebrew Bible does not mention it by its proper name. Rather, “great light” (אתהמאור הגדל) is employed. The moon suffers the same authorial negligence, as “lesser light” (אתהמאור הקטן) becomes the designation. vv14f tells of the creation of the heavenly lights (same designation, pl.: מארת) and their purpose: Dividing day and night, signs for seasons, calendrical purposes and of course the giving of light.²³² In vv16-18 the sun and moon are placed in the sky commissioned to be in dominion of (ממשלה) day and night. The stars are barely mentioned in v16, with the simple ואת הכוכבים, “and the stars” almost as if “thrown” in there. Here the common noun for “star” is employed.

The primary word of choice when referring to the sun is, as we have seen, שמש. The reluctance of employing it is commonly explained by the Mesopotamian deity carrying the same name. The mentioned root is applicable to most of the solar deities in the Syrian/Palestinian area as well as in the Akkadian testimonies from Mesopotamia. The etymological bonds with the Ugaritic špš are close.²³³ It is here the above warning applies: not all mention of the sun is anti-foreign polemic, as there naturally is a clear distinction between casual mention and veneration. In this case, however, polemic may be found in the evading of this common noun. Von Rad is in favor of this solution, as he argues that vv14-19 “has a strongly antimythical feeling”²³⁴. Additionally he argues that the utilizing of “מאור” as “light” is one of

²³¹ Others: “firmament”.

²³² Ps 136:7 recounts the creation of “the great lights” (אורים גדלים), but vv8-9 verses mention sun, moon and stars by their common nouns.

²³³ Smith, *The Memoirs of God*, 98.

²³⁴ Rad, Gerhard von, *Genesis: a Commentary* (rev. ed.; OTL; Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press,

degradation. Thus the sun and the other celestial bodies are mere lamps in the sky placed there by the creator, and have no light in themselves (light was created already, on the first day).²³⁵ This, von Rad argues, attests to the Priestly agenda of this creation narrative: Subordinating creation to the creator.²³⁶ Hamilton agrees in this respect, noting that the autonomy of the celestial bodies has been replaced with serfdom.²³⁷ The total absence of the common solar and lunar words probably points to this fact: The connection of the common noun was simply too close to the proper name given to the solar and lunar deities. Many commentators remark the possible parallels between the first chapter of Genesis and the Babylonian creation epic (*Enūma Eliš*) wherein Marduk slays the personified chaos, Tiamat, and creates the world of men from her carcass.²³⁸ The closest parallel to EE, however, is the calendrical purposes of Marduk in placing the lights on the sky.²³⁹

There does seem to be a broad consensus of the notion that the Genesis accounts has polemical overtones. Smith proposes to see displacement of old divinities in the entire account, underscoring God's sovereignty as creating force.²⁴⁰ As a part of the Priestly source such a designation is fitting. If this was composed during or after the exile, surely polemic against Mesopotamian tradition (that surely correlated with the indigenous Canaanite traditions) would be found. In this regard, many important differences between the Genesis account and the EE are easily discerned. The most important one would be the most obvious: Sharp distinction between creator and creation, so evident from the account in question.

Deuteronomy 4:15-20

¹⁵ *So guard yourselves carefully, because you did not see any likeness [of God] on the day YHWH spoke to you on Horeb, from the midst of the fire,* ¹⁶ *so that you would not deal corruptly in making to yourselves an idol; a likeness of any image in the figure of a male nor a female,* ¹⁷ *an image of any animal that is on the earth, an*

1972), 55; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1; Dallas: Word Books, 1987), 27.

²³⁵ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 55f.

²³⁶ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 51f, 65f.

²³⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmanns, 1990), 127.

²³⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 127f; von Rad, *Genesis*, 50, 52, 110f; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 21.

²³⁹ "The Creation Epic," (ANET, 60-72 (Tablet V:1f, 12), 501 (V:45 and very likely preceding broken fragment)).

²⁴⁰ Smith, *The Memoirs of God*, 98.

image of any winged bird that flies in the sky,¹⁸ an image of anything that creeps on the ground, an image of any fish that is in the waters underneath the earth.¹⁹ And so that you would not lift your eyes to the heavens and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be cast aside in bowing down to them and serving them, that which YHWH your God has allotted all peoples under the entirety of the heavens.²⁰ But you YHWH has taken and brought out from the iron blast furnace²⁴¹, from Egypt, to become to him a people of his possession, such as at this day.”

The image ban, so specific to a multifaceted Israelite tradition,²⁴² is laid out in this Deuteronomic pericope. The level of detail in the Biblical record often is high in regard to legislation, and this is no exception. Specifically, in vv16-18, neither male nor female, neither bird nor earthly beast, neither creep nor fish shall be made a graven image of. A particularly celestial aspect is added in v19, as the temptation to worship sun (שמש), moon (ירח) and stars (כוכב) is strongly discouraged (cf. Deut 17:3). Concretely: “[Do not]...walk astray and bow down to them or serve them”. It is further maintained that this kind of worship belongs to other nations, contrary to the Israelites, which YHWH took for himself and led out of Egypt. The denigration of sun, moon and star worship, as well as the common mention of the עֲבֹדַת הַשָּׁמַיִם (“host of heaven”) resonates in 2 Kings as well.²⁴³ As we will see, the purpose is to describe the religious conduct of apostate kings.

Taylor sees the passage as exilic and a clear-cut prohibition of solar Yahwism, in which case he moves to postulate that the other celestial bodies were associated with YHWH as well.²⁴⁴ McKay focuses on the important mention of the other nations, whose worship is that of the celestial bodies.²⁴⁵ Certainly, as we will see, the astral aspect is incredibly important and widespread in pantheons of the ancient Near East (see ch. 3.a). Many gods was associated with celestial bodies (Ashur, Marduk, Baal)²⁴⁶; some were even direct personifications of them (Shamash, Sin, Ishtar)²⁴⁷.

²⁴¹ “Iron blast furnace” is the JPS translation of מַכּוּר, to which I am indebted here.

²⁴² Exod 20:4-5a; 34:17; Lev 19:4; 26:1; Deut 5:8-9a.

²⁴³ 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3,5; 23:4f.

²⁴⁴ J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel* (JSOTSup 111; Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1993), 108f.

²⁴⁵ John McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians 732-609 BC* (London; SCM Press Ltd., 1973), 49.

²⁴⁶ McKay, *Religion in Judah*, 46.

²⁴⁷ McKay, *Religion in Judah*, 48.

McKay's primary object is to show that the Assyrian overlordship did not impose its religious preferences on its vassal subjects. In this he succeeds, in my opinion, and with Deut 4:19 as an example he maintains that the solar worship took influence from all neighboring nations of Israel, and not Assyria in particular.²⁴⁸ Christensen evaluates the "creeping things" of v18 to possibly be of Egyptian origin,²⁴⁹ as the scarab (see ch. 3.b) was an important representation of solar aspects. Hobbs, on the other hand, is positive that a Canaanite background is implicit in these passages.²⁵⁰

Tigay sees the possibility that the argument of the former (images of men and animals) applies also to the astral objects: No shape was seen out of the fire on Horeb; not even the lights on the sky were visible because of the phenomena connected to the YHWH's self-revelation.²⁵¹ I find this argument difficult (albeit a creative one), but I see no reason to involve the theophany in a veiling of the heavens. Legislation on idolatry and images stands perfectly fine independently and does not necessarily need narrative explanation, like the image ban is given in this context. Explanation is given in the succeeding strophe, in the argument of the "other nations'" cults. More interestingly, the tendency towards worshipping frequently reminds the commentary authors of Job 31:26-28 (treated below) which indeed describes this inclination in a suitable manner. In the words of Tigay, they "express the seductiveness of idolatry, especially of the heavenly bodies. Their majestic position in the sky, their fixed and eternal character, their movements, the light and warmth they provide, and their beneficial impact on agriculture suggest that they are powerful, and this moves people to worship them."²⁵²

Sure enough, an important part of the HB traditions is the ban on graven images. We may maintain that such a prohibition stems from the monolatry upheld in the multitude HB sources. This source is one of them, as it makes perfectly clear that celestial worship is not tolerable by legal standard. Idolatry, then, seems to be the background for such legislation. As I elaborate on below, the aniconistic legislation that probably began with the Mosaic codes outlawed objects of worship made by man. Could, then, objects made by YHWH be seen by some as a valid object of worship if representing YHWH himself? Celestial worship was a widespread practice,

²⁴⁸ McKay, *Religion in Judah*, 48.

²⁴⁹ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1-21:9* (WBC 6A; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 89.

²⁵⁰ T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (WBC 13; Waco: Word Books, 1985), 333.

²⁵¹ Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 49.

²⁵² Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 50.

and virtually no pantheon in the ancient Near East or adjoining areas lacked a solar deity of some form. As more “natural” objects of worship than any other, the celestial bodies were sources of information regarding navigation and seasons (not to mention the astrological purposes), and as such they probably enjoyed a more faithful veneration than those of fertility deities and deities of the more circumstantial elements of life. Safe to say, then, the author of these verses knew probably very well the people’s inclination to engage in astral cultism, and sought to remove it. Taylor is probably right in asserting that this passage serves as a closing of a loophole in the legislation.²⁵³ However, is it feasible to say that we see here a tendency to regard YHWH as a solar deity, or at least the sun as his image? What we do know is that the passage is polemical towards all kinds of astral worship. It seems reasonable that solar Yahwism would be too infringing on the first commandment to win any significant ground. We do not, however, know how far this prospective worship went in its personification, but we do know that official religion moved further and further towards a complete aniconic and transcendental godhead incapable of representation.

We do know, however, that this development took place for a reason. Solar connotations might have been an issue in this regard, and the clue of לְכֹל הָעַמִּים תַּחַת כָּל הַשָּׁמַיִם, “*all the peoples under the entirety of heaven*”, is clear on the fact that this is a widespread phenomenon in the neighboring areas. Yet it is not for the people of YHWH to engage in. With McKay we might agree that Assyria was not necessarily the background for this prohibition, though the timetable and vassalhood would fit neatly in this picture. No obvious relation is made available in this context, but we may assume that the author has gentile worship in general in mind when listing the forbidden objects of worship.

2 Kings 21:3-6

³ *For he brought back and rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had destroyed, he raised altars to Baal, made an asherah like Ahab had done, bowed down to the entirety of the host of heaven, serving them.* ⁴ *And he built altars in the House of YHWH, of which YHWH has said: ‘In Jerusalem I will place my name’.* ⁵ *And*

²⁵³ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 108f.

he built altars for the entirety of the host of heaven in the two courts of the House of YHWH. ⁶ And he caused his son to pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying and divination, and had dealings with necromancers, transgressing greatly. He did much evil before the eyes of YHWH, provoking him.”

The Deuteronomistic Historian does not suppress the fact that the rulers of Israel and Judah dealt carelessly with the issue of non-Yahwistic religion. The kind of report given in the DtrH seems to many to be biased; nonetheless we have good reason to accept the credibility of apostate kingship in periods of time. Very few of the kings are commended, as most of them broke the standards of monolatry in the erection of Asherahs (אשרה) and altars (מזבחות) to foreign deities. The case of the infamous Manasseh is no exception. His eagerness in promoting foreign religion is referenced in 2 Kgs 21:3 and further in v4f, in which the latter attest to erections of altars inside the temple area. The gravity of this blaspheming action is emphasized as the typically Deuteronomistic mention of the dwelling of the name occurs: “He built altars in the house of YHWH, of which YHWH has said: “In Jerusalem I will place my name”” (v4). According to v5 he built in the temple courts altars to “the entirety of the host of heaven” (כל צבא השמים), the very same term we encounter in Deut 4:19; 17:3 and Jer 8:2 (cf. also 2 Kgs 17:16). Further, in v6 there is reference to the passing of his son through fire, which will be commented in the section on 2 Kgs. 23.

The sun in itself is not mentioned here, but since we know that 2 Kgs draw on Deuteronomic themes, we may deduce that the religious activity described in Deut 4:19 correspond to that of Manasseh. A common tendency of Deuteronomic law is the plentiful midrashic elaborations on laws so as to eliminate any possible loophole or misunderstanding. The “sun, moon and stars” of Deut 4:19 thus possibly form such an elaboration, in which case the original short form would simply be כל צבא השמים. Either way I would not hesitate to interpret the term as “the bodies of the heavenly sphere”. It is in light of this, however, that 1 Kgs 22:19-23 could prove problematic. This theophanic scene, parallel to the call narrative of Isa 6:1,²⁵⁴ clearly put “the heavenly host” in the position of divine council, a frequently found concept of the ancient Near East: The divine council is composed of the heralds and subordinates of the chief deity, exemplified in the Canaanite pantheon by the lesser deities

²⁵⁴ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 226; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (rev. ed. Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2005) 104f.

surrounding El in the throne room (cf. Elyon in Deut 32:8f).²⁵⁵ If the “host of heaven” in the HB itself (even inside the DtrH) is personified as the divine council of YHWH, then it is tempting to picture the sun, moon and stars as the heralds with whom YHWH confers. The same imagery may be found in Ps 103:21: The *צבא* stands parallel to the “ministers (*משרתיו*) who enact his will”.²⁵⁶ Taylor agrees in this respect,²⁵⁷ but goes a step further as he believes the center of this divine council-scene to be the sun representing YHWH. The moon and stars would thus serve as his court and attendees.²⁵⁸ Naturally following Smith’s assertion we have the same explanation as above: The *raison d’être* of the Deuteronomic prohibition stems from this loophole in the aniconic legislation: The astral bodies were not graven images but part of creation and would in instances serve as symbols for YHWH.²⁵⁹ Like we have seen, the Deuteronomistic tendency is that towards divine transcendency. I cannot follow Taylor entirely in his quest for solar Yahwism tied to the “heavenly host”. Even if the host is directly associated with the astral bodies, there is great difficulty involved in attributing solar capacity to YHWH.

Finally, even if YHWH stands amid the host (1 Kgs 22:19-23) and thus amid the astral bodies, the etymology of the word is primarily connected to warfare and military conduct.²⁶⁰ As such a divine court of YHWH would, preferably, in a much more anthropomorphic way be represented by an entourage of deities. The celestial imagery and association of a god to a given celestial object were only secondary in this respect. In addition we may mention the eschatological Isa 24:21-23, wherein v21 the host of heaven (not *השמים*, but *המקום*) is to be punished, possibly as polemic against their wrongfully given divine status.²⁶¹ In my opinion, the passages of Kings point toward syncretism rather than iconism. The leap is simply too great to employ solar Yahwism as an indigenous process in order to describe its origin. It is feasible, however, that since the Deuteronomic passages seem to be ancient, traces of a solar rendering of YHWH may be found in the concept of his position in the heavenly host. Nevertheless, disagreeing with Taylor, we have too little to go on. The mention of

²⁵⁵ Bernard M. Levinson, “Deuteronomy: Introduction and Annotations,” in *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 356-450 (441).

²⁵⁶ Helmer Ringgren, “*צבא*,” *TDOT* XII:213.

²⁵⁷ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 105f.

²⁵⁸ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 107.

²⁵⁹ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 107: “In other words, the issue is not syncretism but iconism.”

²⁶⁰ Ringgren, *TDOT* XII:211.

²⁶¹ Ringgren, *TDOT* XII:213.

Baal and the asherah is quite transparent and points directly to native, Canaanite religion, but it is doubtful whether any deduction can be made on that fact. The circumstantial evidence seems to not be uniquely traceable to any concrete area but the context's.

2 Kings 23:4f, 11f

⁴ Then the king commanded Hilkiah, the high priest, the secondary priests and the doorkeepers to bring out from the Temple of YHWH all of the utensils made for Ba'al and the asherah and the entirety of the host of heaven. Then he burned them in the outskirts of Jerusalem, in the fields of Kidron, and brought their ashes to Beth-El. ⁵ He deposed the idolatrous priests which the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places of the cities of Judah and of the vicinity of Jerusalem, and those who burned incense for Ba'al, the sun and the moon and the constellations and the entirety of the host of heaven.

¹¹ And he removed the horses which the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, by the entrance to the House of YHWH, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech the eunuch by the parwarim. The chariots of the sun he burned with fire. ¹² And the altars on the rooftop of the chamber of Ahaz, which were made by the kings of Judah, and the altars which were made by Manasseh in the two courts of the House of YHWH, the king tore down. Then he hurried away and threw their dust into the brook of Kidron."

The passage of 23:4f, part of the unit 23:1-7, is in much the same way as 21:3-6 indicating of a present solar cult.²⁶² The king in question is the grandson of Manasseh, Josiah. The context is pretty much a reversal of that of Manasseh's passage, if not oversimplifying. Josiah is the righteous king who, after the finding of the law book in the temple, seeks to abolish all kinds of idolatry in Judah. v4 introduces the entire ordeal described in ridding Judah of foreign cult, and refers to "utensils" (כלי) made for Baal, Asherah and the השמים. v5, however, speaks of those who burn incense on the במה. Baal is also an object of worship here, along with

²⁶² Cf. also Isa 24:21-23; Jer 8:2.

the sun and moon in addition to the more general צבא השמים and the constellations.²⁶³ In v11 there is mention of the את־מרכבות השמש and the את־מרכבות השמש לַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, two otherwise unknown phenomena. They are the “horses which the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun” and the “chariots of the sun”. Mentioned inside the same verse these may have a specific connection; we will soon enough discuss what the significance of these objects is. v12 offers another interesting reference to altars on the roof above “the rooftop of the chamber of Ahaz”, and also a reference to the altars built by Manasseh in 2 Kgs 21:4f. Like the utensils, the chariots were burnt, the horses taken away and the altars were ground to dust by Josiah. Further in his iconoclastic rampage he effectively removes all priesthood from the local areas. Josiah seeks to eliminate all non-Yahwistic cult, as he tears down all the altars (מִזְבְּחוֹת), all the pillars (מַצְבֹּת) and asherim in addition to defilement of the high places (בְּמוֹת) with bones of men. In this greater unit of 22:1-23:26, (in which 23:4-24 is obliteration of alien cultism) there is reference to many foreign deities, even by national designation: “...for Ashtoret the atrocity of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the atrocity of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the sons of Ammon.” (v13). Additionally, there is mention of Molech in v10. I will now move to comment these cases further. Regarding the heavenly host, much has also been said above.

We will take some time to evaluate the cult elements that Josiah considered blasphemous or syncretistic. Firstly, the “utensils” (כֵּלִי) of 23:4 are of unknown character to us. We may assume that they were tools or vessels of some kind,²⁶⁴ for use in rites of worshipping Baal, Asherah and the heavenly host. Further there are incense burnt to the appeasement of Baal and a now comprehensive listing of astral objects: The sun, moon, constellations and the heavenly host. The latter has been thoroughly discussed above, but here is clear reference to the sun as an object being made sacrifices to. We do not have to rely on other terms when here is a direct reference to solar worship. There is little else in the immediate context that is suggestive of the details of this sun cult, other than that the practitioners of this worship took no heed to the exclusiveness of the Solomonic temple. If the altars inside the temple complex (v11) indeed were put up by the infamous Manasseh, then we speak of a royally encouraged astral cult inside the temple precincts that probably enjoyed substantial support.

²⁶³ The *dis legomenon* מִזְלֹת is also encountered here, probably: “Constellations”.

²⁶⁴ Cf. LXX “σκεῦος”, which may simply render “thing, object”: BAGD, 927.

The altars on the roof of Ahaz' chambers should provoke some interest to us. Other HB passages report similar structures on roofs, like Jer 19:13 and Zeph 1:5, and as in these passages, rooftops were indeed a suitable area for astral worship.²⁶⁵ Both worship and sacrifice to the heavenly host are mentioned, and in addition, the Zephanian passage mentions the Ammonite Milcom. v12 is clear on the origin of the installments, "the kings of Judah" (cf. 21:4f). The reference to both Ahaz and Manasseh may indicate them as such particular kings, which not surprisingly fits with the DtrH's recounting of their reigns. An interesting remark is made in Isaiah 38:8 regarding a sundial of Ahaz. One can only speculate that he put up this ancient "clockwork", but nothing particularly negative or even cultic stands out from this passage.

The case of the sun-dedicated horses in v11 sparks interest, as no other such mention exists in the HB.²⁶⁶ A direct link between equine creatures and the sun is hard to find in West Semitic areas, but the Persian deity Mithra is in the Avesta mentioned as in front of the "swift-horsed sun" (see chapter 3.a.v for more on this).²⁶⁷ I interpret the Hebrew horse connection in much the same way as the utensils of v4; that they were used in rituals for the respective deities they were dedicated to. The horses have been suggested to have been used in solar rites involving some kind of ritual procession.²⁶⁸ In this case I will consider the chariots mentioned in the same verse to be drawn by these horses. In the religion of the Greeks and corresponding cults of that area it was a common idea that the solar journey was effectuated by a chariot pulling it. This tradition, however, does not seem to have won much ground in Semitic culture. Additionally, in Egypt the journey is made by boat. It is anyhow unclear how what the horses and chariots were used for, but we may safely presume that they were *used* somehow and were obviously not only for show. According to v11 the creatures were stationed next to the entrance of the temple, which may further underscore the solar cult activity there. We need also to consider Hobbs' view here, that the horses are not alive but are simply "statues or figurines".²⁶⁹ He adds that such figurines have been found (interestingly, with solar characteristics – see ch.

²⁶⁵ John Gray, *I and II Kings: a Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1963), 737.

²⁶⁶ However, cf. Zech 9:10.

²⁶⁷ "Yasht 10.IV" translated by William W. Malandra (*An introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion: Readings from the Avesta and Ancient Achaemenid inscriptions*.(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 60).

²⁶⁸ Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 334f.

²⁶⁹ Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 334.

3.b.ii) but like Gray abandons speculation on their purpose.²⁷⁰ Sweeney, however, comments the liturgical purpose in seeing YHWH in a metaphoric traversing of the sky at sunrise, as this would be the time for the first service of the day.²⁷¹

I would like to comment upon the origin of the gods mentioned in vv10 and 13: To begin with, there is no reason to doubt their respective geographical designations. Well evidenced from Ugarit and even Egypt,²⁷² Astarte was a known and worshipped goddess. Sidon was no exception, as the king-priest there was dedicated to her divinity.²⁷³ For Chemosh there is also a variety of resources, but most importantly in this regard is the mention of the famous Mesha stele. Here the Moabite king brags of his victory against the Israelite people, and attributes his success to Chemosh.²⁷⁴ The Ammonite Milcom also has archaeological support of its origin.²⁷⁵ Molech of v10 is very probably a Canaanite deity,²⁷⁶ perhaps Phoenician (see 3.a.iii) or Punic,²⁷⁷ but ancient testimony to this name is not plentiful. Briquel-Chattonet argues, among other things on the basis of geographical distance,²⁷⁸ that the Phoenician connections to Judah do not lie behind Judean appropriation of the cult.²⁷⁹ The Semitic root is *mlk*, and thus similar to connotations of “royal” or “rule”. As far as we can tell from the divine names of 2 Kgs 23, the alien cultism was in essence represented by deities from all the enclosing nations. Suffice it to say that the divinities presented in this context were not chosen randomly, but were as national deities²⁸⁰ the embodiments of the various cults that had flooded across the borders and into the Judean community. The deities have no common background, then, but are all placed in the vicinity of the Jerusalem community. Another voice in this respect was Gray, who was inclined to see a strong Mesopotamian connection (particularly with regard to the

²⁷⁰ Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 334; Gray, *I and II Kings*, 736.

²⁷¹ Marvin Alan Sweeney, *I and II Kings* (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press, 2007), 448.

²⁷² Nicholas Wyatt, “Astarte עשתרת,” *DDD* 109-114 (110f).

²⁷³ Wyatt, *DDD*, 111f.

²⁷⁴ Hans-Peter Müller, “Chemosh כְּמוֹשׁ,” *DDD* 186-189 (187).

²⁷⁵ Emil Puech, “Milcom מִלְכָּם,” *DDD* 575f (575).

²⁷⁶ George. C. Heider, “Molech מוֹלֵךְ,” *DDD* 581-585 (583f).

²⁷⁷ Cf. the discussion in Françoise Briquel-Chattonet, *Les Relations entre les Cités de la Côte Phénicienne et les Royaumes d’Israël et de Juda* (SP XII; OLA 46; Peeters Press, Leuven: 1992), 313-320.

²⁷⁸ Briquel-Chattonet, *Les Relations*, 319f.

²⁷⁹ Briquel-Chattonet, *Les Relations*, 325. The child sacrifice connected to this deity’s cult, indicated by the HB (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; 1 Kgs 11:7; Jer 32:35; cf. also Deut 12:31; 2 Kgs 17:17,31; 21:6; Jer 7:31; 19:5.), has little historical support. This has led some to suggest an initiation rite of sorts (Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 334), which among other things has led to great debate among scholars.

²⁸⁰ There are uncertainties as to the status of Milcom as national deity (Puech, *DDD* 575), and to the status of Molech even as a deity (Heider, *DDD* 581f). This discussion, however, has no place in this dissertation.

altars of Ahaz).²⁸¹ After Gray's contribution to the OTL series McKay, as we know, introduced his well-accepted claim that Assyria never imposed its religion on its subjects (see above). Hobbs considers the accounts "distinctively west Semitic religious activity",²⁸² and has support from Day and Smith, who both suggest a Canaanite background.²⁸³ See the walkthrough of Ezek 8:16 for more on Smith's comments. Nevertheless, I do not deem Gray's claim as invalid, as it is very likely that Ahaz would raise such installments to please his overlords. I still believe, however, that the solar proclivity was much closer geographically to the Hebrew people in Judah.

We may, then, assert that the solar veneration attested is in the same way a part of local cult. We *know* that solar worship was a part of most of Judah's contemporaries' cultism; what we *do not know* is whether inspiration was needed from the outside to engage in such practices. For all we know, the very reason for the bringing of this theme to attention was a development in Yahwism that incorporated elements of solar imagery – or perhaps even solar religion. We have deduced that the Deuteronomic issue at hand was to battle tendencies that had inclinations towards "bowing down to the heavenly host" and the like. The legislative passages of Deut 4 bear witness to an influential polemical voice that seeks the eradication of this form of cultism (whether iconistic or idolatrous). No doubt the very same theme resonates in the DtrH, as the cultic activities described seem to be congruent. We should, however, conclude that *if* we here have concrete influence from neighboring nations, then a particular one is not singled out. Still all the other activities and deities mentioned point toward "local" West Semitic religion rather than Mesopotamian sway, and from this "local" area I infer that the solar cultism is drawn – if at all drawn.

Ezekiel 8:16

¹⁶ And he took me into the inner court of the house of YHWH, and behold: [At] the door to the temple, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, their backs to the temple of YHWH, and their faces eastward, prostrating themselves eastward to the sun."

²⁸¹ Gray, *I and II Kings*, 648.

²⁸² Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 305.

²⁸³ Day, John, "Yahweh and the Gods", 189; Smith, "The Near Eastern Background," 34, 39.

The passages relevant to the theology of the כבוד in Ezekiel have largely been dealt with in chapter 2.b.v below, and these need no further treatment here. There is, however, other mention of solar character. In fact, this is probably the most concrete and direct association to a performance of solar worship. A reference is made to a group of men in the innermost sections of the temple, prostrating themselves (משתחויתם) eastward towards the sun. The direction is emphasized, with “their backs to the House of YHWH”. Now, this quite obvious reference to solar worship takes place in a vision of Ezekiel, as the fourth and last of “abominations” (תועבה) he is taken to see by “the glory of the God of Israel” (כבוד אלהי ישראל). The other abominations he has been shown includes an image or worship item of sorts (vv3-5), other idolatry in violation of the image ban (vv10f), and a rite of “weeping for Tammuz” (v14). The four abominations are by the divine voice insinuated to be steadily worsening. Likewise, the place designations of the different idolatries indicate a movement further and further into the temple, fittingly describing how far the Jerusalem community has gone in their betrayal of conventional Yahwism. In the proceeding verse the divine voice utters “Behold, they are putting the branch to my²⁸⁴ nose!”, perhaps a part of a rite of which the meaning was perhaps already lost to the LXX: “...ἰδοὺ αὐτοὶ ὡς μυκτηρίζοντες” – “Behold, they are putting up their noses”. The ring is clearly negative, as we understand from the context and in the Greek translation. By turning their backs toward the holiest part of the temple, but present in its vicinity, the men commit what is referred to by the divine voice as an “abomination”. The direction is probably the main problem,²⁸⁵ and Zimmerli points to such passages as Jer 2:27; 32:33.²⁸⁶ Both instances are critiquing the ‘turning of the back’ and are part of larger pericopae concerning idolatry.

The most frequently asked question in this regard is where such practices may have come from, and the alternatives are often generalized as either ¹)alien cultism or ²)solar Yahwism. Even in the case of solarized Yahwism foreign influence should be

²⁸⁴ Reading יבא instead of בא, like NO78/85; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24* (trans. R. E. Clements; HC; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 221f; William H. Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19* (WBC 28; Waco: Word Books, 1986), 126.

²⁸⁵ But compare with Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 150, who believes that the Deuteronomistic appeal is to turn away from the sun in worship. I do not see the appeal as negation of the solar aspect, but rather one that is concerned with the sanctity of the dwelling of the Name. It is not about where one *should not* turn, but where one *should*.

²⁸⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 244.

taken into account; obviously neither is a watertight solution. Before I turn to a geographical origin, we must decide which of these two options seems the most reliable. To maintain the distinction between the two I regard the first alternative as plain adoption of foreign cult without regard to the Jerusalemite YHWH-worship, while solarized Yahwism to be the traditional Yahwism with contributions from contemporary (though foreign) solar veneration. "Foreign" might not be a good designation, either, as Canaanite traditions were alive and well in the reign of Manasseh only 50-100 years earlier (2 Kgs 21:1-16). Taylor distinguishes between "worship of *Yahweh* as the sun" and "worship of *the sun* (that is, a physical object) as *Yahweh*".²⁸⁷ In Taylor's eyes the differentiation is important because of what he refers to as iconism implemented in the solar veneration of Ezek 8:16. He goes on to attribute this line of thought with the Deuteronomistic polemic attitude towards "bowing to the Host of Heaven".²⁸⁸ His proposal is valid as far as one is willing to accept that the scene described is in fact one of solar Yahwism. I am reluctant, however, as there are holes in Taylor's deduction. Considering the alleged iconism, the distinction is unnecessary; *de facto*, the problem is improper worship. I will, nonetheless, agree with him in seeing v17bβ as a legitimization of worshipping YHWH as the sun.²⁸⁹ In the end, then, I will go along with solar Yahwism as a description of this scenario. In this case there is ¹⁾a problem of improper worship in turning away from the solomonic altar and ²⁾a problem of improper worship in raising the branch (if correctly assumed as a rite). Seeing the sun as a symbol of YHWH ("my nose") might potentially not be a problem, in my view.

A practice like the one described in 8:16 is not traceable elsewhere in the HB. The exact nature of solar ritual performance is not well attested, but the act of prostration is frequently found in ancient as well as modern ritualism.²⁹⁰ On another *possibly* solar rite, see Job 31:26-28 below. Firstly, Zimmerli criticizes a hurried presumption of a foreign solar cult at the temple, but, like Taylor²⁹¹ and others rather proposes a form of Yahwism with solar features.²⁹² Secondly, in the first case the points of origin are difficult to deduct. Solar worship was, as will become clear in ch. 3.a, part of every single known contemporary pantheon. Perhaps may hints be found

²⁸⁷ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 150 (his emphasis).

²⁸⁸ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 150.

²⁸⁹ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 154f.

²⁹⁰ The HB itself employs מִשְׁתַּחֲוִיִּים, the act of bowing, 172 times.

²⁹¹ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 150.

²⁹² Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 243f; Smith, "The Near Eastern Background," 34, 39.

in the other abominations? The “image of jealousy” does not provoke any particular cultural notion; neither does the idolatry session in the court. The quite specific reference to Tammuz, however, encourages at least Alster to postulate an “extremely strong” Babylonian-influenced background for the abominations.²⁹³ Eichrodt is convinced that a Marduk-Shamash cult was conducted by officials of Jerusalem, and cites 8:7ff as documentation of Babylonian influence.²⁹⁴

A common ancient religious concept is the death and resurrection of a vegetation god. It has been debated for a long time whether or not Tammuz-Dumuzi fits this pattern, but in the time of Ezekiel there can be no doubt that in syncretism with West Semitic deities he was regarded a vegetation god.²⁹⁵ Either way the festival allotted to him was one of mourning and thus fits 8:14; the women ritualistically took the place of Tammuz' grieving spouse Inanna.²⁹⁶ A Middle Bronze Age text from Mari mentions the death and resurrection of Dumuzi, and very plausibly he was a known deity in the various cults of Syria and Lebanon.²⁹⁷ On the other hand, it seems plausible that Ezekiel would employ names of deities he was familiar with in the exile. Alster's stance thus seems needlessly resolute in view of Tammuz' renown in the area. Finally, Brownlee adduces the notion that the definite article in התמוז, “The Tammuz”, may point to a syncretism that even included YHWH.²⁹⁸ In such a case then two out of four abominations would concern improper worship instead of idolatry.

Smith, however, seems to be fairly certain that Syro-Palestinian sway is behind the solar veneration language of both 2 Kgs 23 above and this verse: The influence is “general theophanic luminosity” that was attributed to YHWH and the monarchy in the first millennium but was condemned as idolatry by the authors of Ezekiel and Kings.²⁹⁹ Thus it was an “indigenous” process, but of course the range of other Near Eastern symbolism confirmed this development. This goes to show as Egyptian background could also be a tempting guess, even if this period of Assyrian

²⁹³ Bendt Alster, “Tammuz תמוז,” *DDD* 828-834 (833).

²⁹⁴ Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: a Commentary* (trans. Cosslett Quin; OTL; Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1970), 127, 135f.

²⁹⁵ Trygve N. D. Mettinger, *The Riddle of Resurrection: “Dying and Rising Gods” in the Ancient Near East* (CBOTS 50; Lund: Liber, 2001), 213.

²⁹⁶ Mettinger, *Resurrection*, 199.

²⁹⁷ Mettinger, *Resurrection*, 206; Cf. similarly, Morgenstern, “The King-God,” 140, postulates veneration of Tammuz' in Tyre.

²⁹⁸ Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 136.

²⁹⁹ Smith, “The Near Eastern Background,” 38f.

and Babylonian vassalhood with certainty had the most important influence. The Mesopotamian origin of Tammuz seems probable, but the syncretism of this time makes the origin irrelevant, as Tammuz was known in the entire ancient Near East. As others,³⁰⁰ I am prone to seeing Phoenician or general West Semitic inspiration here, as the HB and even Ezekiel (Judgment of Tyre and Sidon: Ezek 26:1-28:21) bears plentiful witness to the relationship between Israel/Judah and the Phoenician city-states. We cannot, when considering Phoenicia, overlook the passages of 1 Kgs 5:15-25 and 7:13-45. Documented there are the massive donations of Lebanese cypress and the Tyrian Hiram who decorates the interior of the Solomonic temple. If foreigners were put to do the work on the temple itself, then perhaps legislation on non-Yahwistic activity was more lenient than the HB is wont to give away.

Considering the other passages in Ezekiel that employs a solar portrayal of YHWH, I have discussed them at length in ch. 2.b.v. I believe the details found there will suffice.

Job 31:26-28

“²⁶ If I looked at the sun³⁰¹ as it sparkled, or the moon moving gloriously,²⁷ and in secrecy my heart was enticed, and my mouth met my hand, kissing it,²⁸ indeed, this would be a sin calling for judgment, for I would have acted deceitfully to God above.”

This small part of Job's "defense speech" informs the addressee that Job does not consider himself guilty in engaging in solar or lunar worship. This act of idolatry is condemned in many passages, plentifully referenced above. What is interesting to us, however, is the rite described: Mouth kissing hand. Some translations³⁰² interpret the difficult v27b in the manner of "blowing kisses". I agree with Clines in the controversy hidden behind the "secret enticement"; probably the illegitimacy of this kind of worship moves the author deeply.³⁰³ Not even the smallest kiss, the motivation of which lies hidden from view in the heart, is acceptable to God.

The style of this "Joban disclaimer" (ch. 31) is strongly reminiscent of Egyptian

³⁰⁰ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 243; Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 136.

³⁰¹ Translating "sun" here as most others, but: "אֶרֶב", cf. Gen 1:14-18.

³⁰² NLT, WEB, NAS, NAB, GWN, NBK, N30.

³⁰³ David J. A. Clines, *Job 21-37* (WBC 18A; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 1026

listings of sins the author repudiates.³⁰⁴ Clines has made me aware of two other possible backgrounds for this rite:³⁰⁵ Firstly, according to Lucian (2nd century CE), the Greeks of his time kissed their hands in prayer to the sun.³⁰⁶ Though it is a very concrete parallel, it is probably best to look for an earlier example. Secondly, according to Langdon, the throwing of kisses was the prevalent way of worshipping in Sumer, Babylon and Assyria.³⁰⁷ Pope emphasizes the hand movement to the mouth as a “token of reverent silence”, and like Balentine he refers to a Babylonian statuette from Larsa depicting a worshiper in this position.³⁰⁸ Gruber adds that this gesture is “frequently illustrated” on cylinder seals of Mesopotamia.³⁰⁹ The *Codex Hammurabi* has been found chiseled into a diorite stele in which on top the figure of Hammurabi stands, with his hand to his mouth, in front of Shamash, probably receiving the law.³¹⁰ This posture might add to the evidence of these commentators. We find here no definite background for the rite described in Job, but it seems as if the Babylonian case is the most concrete evidence we have. I dare believe that hand rituals in general, well known from Hinduism and other religions, was quite commonplace in this entire area. The same goes for kisses, perhaps the most conventional kind of showing affection.

iii. Solar onomastics in the Hebrew Bible

We need also to take a look at names that are available to us through the scriptures of the HB. The well-known character of Samson (“man of the sun”³¹¹, “sunny”³¹² or “little sun”³¹³) of Judg 14-16, is a quite unique name in the Bible as it strongly

³⁰⁴ Samuel E. Balentine, *Job* (S&HBC 10; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 474, but cf. “The Protestation of Guiltlessness,” translated by John A. Wilson (*ANET* 34-36), which is also similar to the Akkadian “Temple Program for the New Year’s Festivals at Babylon,” translated by A. Sachs (*ANET* 331-334 (ca. lines 423-430)).

³⁰⁵ Clines, *Job* 21-37, 1026f.

³⁰⁶ Lucian, *Salt*. 17.

³⁰⁷ Stephen Herbert Langdon, “Gesture in Sumerian and Babylonian Prayer: A study in Babylonian and Assyrian Archaeology,” *JRAS* Oct. 1919, 531-556 (549f). He even adduces that the Sumerian root *šub* (to kiss) “already in the earliest times came to mean ‘pray, prayer’”.

³⁰⁸ Marvin H. Pope, *Job* (AB 15; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 235; Balentine, *Job*, 490.

³⁰⁹ Mayer Gruber, “Job: Introduction and Annotations,” in *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1499-1562 (1546).

³¹⁰ *ANEP*, 77 (246).

³¹¹ Boling, *Judges*, 225.

³¹² Day, John, “Yahweh and the Gods,” 190.

³¹³ Lipiński, *DDD* 764-768 (765).

suggests a theophoric variant of the Canaanite solar deity *špš*.³¹⁴ Day has made me aware of some profoundly interesting details of Samson's story: He points out a similarity between this narrative and the tradition of the solar deities of the area in an understanding of the hair as symbolic of sunrays.³¹⁵ Further the opposition of his wife Delilah (דלילה, similar to לילה, night), and lastly the Psalmic rendering of the sun as an athlete (see comments on Ps 19:6 above, ch. 2.b.i).³¹⁶ Many scholars evaluate the possibility of an extrabiblical solar myth behind the story of Samson, and note his proximity to Beth-Shemesh.³¹⁷

Lipiński calls attention to Shimsai of Ezra 4:8-9³¹⁸ and possibly Shahsai of Ezra 10:40, but like in the case of Samson he dismisses any positive hint of theophory.³¹⁹ A last case to be noted is Neriah, father of Baruch and Serahiah.³²⁰ The name, "YHWH is [my] light[lamp]"³²¹, is additionally attested on a stamp seal from the time of Jeremiah,³²² and could be a wonderful example of solar imagery of YHWH. נר, "lamp", however, has nothing exclusively solar about it. Perhaps, then, we should confine ourselves to "light imagery". The reference to YHWH as lamp may point to his guidance, particularly in view of Deut 33:2 and the like, where "fire, law" is issued from his hand. Similarly 2 Sam 23:3-4 compares the morning light to righteous rule. It is tempting to also consider Ps 84:12, directly calling YHWH "sun". Most fitting, considering the lamp, is the famous Ps 119:105, where the word of YHWH equals a lamp (נר) unto the feet of the believer.

The above-mentioned Beth-Shemesh ("house-" or "temple of the sun") is encountered in the Book of Joshua as a geographical designation,³²³ while in the Books of Kings and Chronicles it is a scene of feuding.³²⁴ Jer 43:13 mentions a city by this name, but it is more than probable that it refers to Heliopolis of Egypt. At least it is not the same place as the other occurrences. 1 Sam 6 tells part of the story of

³¹⁴ Day, John, "Yahweh and the Gods," 190.

³¹⁵ Day, John, "Yahweh and the Gods," 190f.

³¹⁶ Day, John, "Yahweh and the Gods," 190f.

³¹⁷ Jan Alberto Soggin, *Le livre des Juges* (CAT; Genève: Labor et Fides, 1987), 204; Gray, John, *Joshua, Judges and Ruth* (NCBC, Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1967) 234f; Day, John, "Yahweh and the Gods," 190f.

³¹⁸ Also vv 17, 23.

³¹⁹ Lipiński, *DDD* 764-768 (764f); Edward Lipiński, "שמש," *TDOT* XV:305-313 (307).

³²⁰ Jer 32:12,16; 36:4,8,14,32; 43:3,6; 45:1

³²¹ Georg Fischer, *Jeremia 26-52* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 199.

³²² Nahman Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae From the Time of Jeremiah: Remnants of a Burnt Archive* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 29.

³²³ Josh 15:10;19:22,38; 21:16; similarly, En-Shemesh: 15:7; 18:17; Ir-Shemesh: 19:41.

³²⁴ 1 Kgs 4:9; 2 Kgs 14:11,13; 1 Chr 6:44 (geogr. design.); 2 Chr 25:21,23; 28:18.

how the Ark of the Covenant found its way back from Philistine captivity. Intriguingly, it makes a stop in this place named after the sun. One could easily be stirred into thinking that some deeper meaning lies behind this story, but in that case it is lost to us now.

Like in other cases, we have too little to go on in establishing any positive background for the names. Even if they are inspired by cognates pertaining to the sun, there is not necessarily a divine or theophoric background to them. A significant exception, though, may be “Yehozerah”, treated in ch. 3.b.iii. The peculiar circumstances of Samson, however, lead me to believe that at least his and Delilah’s name are no coincidence. Nonetheless, here is not necessarily any solar cultism in its background. It is, to be sure, problematic to base a concept like solar Yahwism on theophoric elements in Hebrew names. Firstly, have we interpreted the name correctly? Secondly, do we know enough about the naming traditions of the ancients? Thirdly, are the elements of the names meant to convey something about the character of a deity, or are we dealing with a cognate ripe with association? These are questions not easily answered. No certain theophoric YHWH-name containing “sun” or similar words occur. Inconveniently, lack of evidence neither proves nor disproves anything. Perhaps it is wise to keep in mind the case of Ishboshet and other possible cases of polemical renaming. If a name contained a theophoric element that was considered either blaspheming or supporting strange deities, chances were good that this name was changed, perhaps to something diminishing or pejorative to a given deity. This would mean that names like Yehoshamash or Yahshamash could originally be contained in the literature but left out as tradition was handed down.

iv. Excursus A: “In the morning there are shouts of joy”

The reference in the title is taken from Ps 30:6, a temple dedication psalm, according to v1. The strophe is commenting on the faithfulness of YHWH, and displays a strong confidence in his salvific properties. The reason for including this reference is the notion of saving action affiliated with the *morning*, or *daybreak*. Even if no specific link to the “solarisms” of the analysis texts may be found therein, the small strophe

conveys the idea that divine salvation is expected as the sun dawns.³²⁵ The same tendency is even more apparent in Ps 46: wherein God will aid (עזר) Jerusalem at the approach of morning (בקר). Interestingly, the term “בקר” is not necessarily the wide space of time that we know as “morning”, but in many cases it would refer to the instantaneous event of *daybreak*^{326, 327} when it becomes light. In 2 Sam 23:4 (see above), it stands parallel to the rising of the sun (יורה שמש), and naturally these two occur at the same time.³²⁸ Barth, however, shows that the meaning of the term changes in its many occurrences, and that it not at all times convey a hope of salvation.³²⁹

This phenomenon finds confirmation in the exodus account, the most important Hebrew biblical testimony of divine intervention. The most crucial passage, in my opinion, is Exod 14:24ff, where in “the morning watch”³³⁰ YHWH smites the Egyptians with confusion and further knocks the wheels of the enemy chariots. In the following events, in vv27-29, “*in the morning*”, the water that has been held back for the Israelites drowns the Egyptians. The very same notion can be found elsewhere in the exodus account as well, e.g. when considering the *manna* provided from heaven. The peculiar epiphany of 16:10 (promised in v7) tells of YHWH’s כבוד being revealed in the sky (also occurring in the morning). In the following verses comes a divine promise that YHWH will feed the people (vv11-12). Vv13-15 explains the concept of *manna*, and how it appears “in the morning”. This continued, according to v35, for 40 years. Suffice it to say that if Israelite historiography suggests that divine salvation occurred each and every morning for a consecutive 40 year-period of wilderness wandering, then of course some basic, central part of HB theology would emphasize the divine beneficence as connected to the dawn. Other texts corroborate this inclination, perhaps facilitating the notion of a “dawning deity”.³³¹ Presumably older traditions carry the same kind of phrasing, tying the righteous rule based on a divine model to the light of morning (2 Sam 23:4, see above). The notion is recognized in

³²⁵ For this notion I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, prof. Karl William Weyde. No published manuscript of his, however, can be referenced in this instance.

³²⁶ Interestingly, a possible etymology suggest “breaking” or “splitting”, see Jan Bergman, Helmer Ringgren and C. Barth, “בקר,” *TDOT* II:217-228 (219).

³²⁷ Bergman, Ringgren and Barth, *TDOT* II:223.

³²⁸ Bergman, Ringgren and Barth, *TDOT* II:223.

³²⁹ Bergman, Ringgren and Barth, *TDOT* II:227f.

³³⁰ NRSV, ESV, NAS, ASV.

³³¹ Cf. 1 Kgs 17:6; Isa 33:2; Hos 6:3; Zeph 3:5; Pss 5:4; 46:6; 59:17; 88:14; 90:14; 101:8; 143:8; Lam 3:22f.

Ps 37:6, where YHWH is the benefactor bestowing righteousness compared to the dawn. This is, of course, figurative language; we are not dealing here with concrete situations of divine “dawning”. Neither are we certain of how far the symbolism has gone: Barth, e.g., is convinced that divine help or refuge is not *in a literal way* expected in the morning, the morning is just symbolically tied to the renewed cosmos.³³² He opposes Ziegler, who in commenting Ps 88:14 and others among those already cited, holds that “...der Morgen die eigentliche Zeit der göttlichen Hilfe ist...”³³³

The morning is not insignificant in the religious life of the ancient Near East, either. To the Egyptians, who viewed the sun as Atum-Ra himself, its rising every morning was an incentive to worship.³³⁴ The root of the term that refers to the sunrise interestingly connotes praise or extolment.³³⁵ Similarly, in Mesopotamia, there are, plentifully attested cases of homage paid to the sun, the best example of which is the Shamash hymn. However, see ch. 3.a.ii under “Assyria”.

Having this in mind, it is probably no coincidence that the texts of Trito-Isaiah and Malachi all converge in the idea of YHWH's redeeming act. They all purport a coming of the deity (or an inquiry of which) at dawn or daybreak, resulting in (or expecting) an act of salvation. As Barth rightly notes (see above) it is careless to simply draw a line between the term בָּקֶר and the salvation of YHWH.³³⁶ Yet I do not doubt that the mindset suggested here displays a belief in renewal at morning light, that relief will manifest itself and that God will be present with his people. Seeing particularly Mal 3:20 and Isa 58:8 in light of this notion, it is not surprising that YHWH is likened to the dawn or the sun itself. He comes, not necessarily *in* the morning, but at least *like* the morning with healing, righteousness and the metaphorical light for the wellbeing of his faithful.

v. Excursus B: The glory of YHWH

Of great importance to this dissertation is the כְּבוֹד יְהוָה, “the glory of YHWH”, immensely significant to the accounts of the self-revelation of YHWH. The phrase is

³³² Bergman, Ringgren and Barth, *TDOT* II:227f.

³³³ Joseph Ziegler, “Die Hilfe Gottes “am Morgen”, *BBB 1: Friedrich Nötscher zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1950), 282.

³³⁴ Bergman, Ringgren and Barth, *TDOT* II:217.

³³⁵ Bergman, Ringgren and Barth, *TDOT* II:217f.

³³⁶ Bergman, Ringgren and Barth, *TDOT* II:227f.

found throughout the entirety of the Hebrew Bible, from the oldest parts to the second temple period. I will in this excursus discuss the meaning of this phrase in some of its occurrences, located in the books of Isaiah, Exodus and Ezekiel.

Etymologically the root כבד connotes something that is physically heavy or laden, also in the metaphorical sense of being weighty (as in having great value) and important or honorable.³³⁷ This kind of double denotation is found also in English: “To weigh one’s words”. The root has verbs, nouns and adjectives that derive from it, and as this noun it appears 199 times in the HB.³³⁸ Biblical usage of the word stretches from expressions of dignity and wealth to designations of strength or glory. In the latter case it is most often the deity who is the subject.³³⁹

This term is, in its most important theologically suggestive settings, naturally descriptive of the character of the deity. In a psalm traditionally acclaimed as one of throne ascension, Ps 24:7-10, we read of the מלך הכבוד. Here the question resonates: Who is the “King of glory”? As the response goes “יהוה צבאות”, YHWH is extolled with reference to creation and his salvific properties. Many of the instances where the כבוד is coupled with the Tetragrammaton occur in cases of theophany: Most prominently perhaps in the prophetic texts, and predominantly in the books of Ezekiel and Isaiah. The Isaian analysis texts both contain the כבוד יהוה, and both are late attributions to the Isaian corpus. The combination of the Tetragrammaton and the כבוד may have been coined at a later stage of HB theology, as it predominantly is found in the Deutero- and Trito-Isaian accounts.

Isaiah

Of the most famous cases of this phrasing we find Isa 6, commonly referred to as the call narrative of Isaiah. The first verse describes a vision of YHWH seated on a throne in the temple. In v3 it is exclaimed by seraphim that the כבוד of YHWH, generally translated as “the glory of YHWH”,³⁴⁰ covers the entirety of the earth. The next verse continues the theophanic description where the temple area is filled with smoke. This description correlates with the accounts of Exod 40:34f, 1 Kgs 8:11 and the later 2 Chr 5:14, which illustrates the inauguration of the Tabernacle and the Solomonic temple. In all of these instances, the presence of YHWH is associated

³³⁷ Moshe Weinfeld, “כבוד,” *TDOT* VII:23; BDB (4318) 458.

³³⁸ Weinfeld, *TDOT* VII:24.

³³⁹ Weinfeld, *TDOT* VII:27.

³⁴⁰ JPS: “presence”.

with smoke. It is in Kings and Chronicles, however, that the smoke seems synonymous to the כבוד. In Isaiah the connection is not as plain, but the smoke is present as a result of the *trishagion* exclaimed by the seraphim. We will also see the presence of smoke or concealing fog/cloud in Ezekiel (below) and elsewhere, but for now I would like to draw the attention to Ps 97:2, wherein cloud (ענן) and fog (ערפל) surrounds YHWH as he is extolled as king. In v6 all peoples see his כבוד.

Isa 59:19, also treated in the Isaiah analyses, carries yet another example of the term. As a futuristic vision Isaiah announces the reverence of YHWH's name in the west, and reverence of his glory in the east. Though it may be a stretch, it is tempting to assume a conjunction between the location *east*³⁴¹ and the כבוד of YHWH. To support this notion I will shortly regard the next colon, v19b α , and its likening of the coming of YHWH to a "stream", as rendered by most translations. The root of this word, נהר, is also used for daylight (as a noun in Job 3:4) and for verbal occasions such as "shining" or "beaming" (Isa 60:5, Ps 34:6), though these latter are figurative for a joyous mood. In the analysis of Isa 58:8 I note that the position of rearward in an exilic homecoming would naturally put the dawning sun in the back of the travelling Israelite community. 66:18f continues the futuristic vision, and nears apocalyptic as universalism makes its entrance here at the close of the book of Isaiah.

Exodus

In the priestly accounts of Exodus the phrase appears in three theophanic occasions. In 16:6-12, as part of the narrative of the *manna* from heaven, the passage is one where Moses promises the Israelites that the כבוד of YHWH will be revealed to them. In v10 it is simply stated that the glory was visible to them in the sky, in a cloud (ענן). This same kind of cloud is encountered later on, in Exod 24:12-18, covering Mt. Sinai as Moses climbs it. v16 claims that *subsequently* the כבוד of God descends on the mountain. From within the cloud YHWH calls upon Moses, and goes on to comment of the view of the Israelites: the כבוד of YHWH is seen as a "consuming fire".³⁴² Again there is only a semi-correlation between the smoke or cloud and the כבוד of God. We may here suspect that the fog, cloud or smoke here simply has got task of veiling or

³⁴¹ Literally: וממזרח-שמש = "place of sunrise", BDB (4217) 280.

³⁴² Here indebted to the JPS translation.

shrouding the very glory of the deity. It is nevertheless remarkable that the *כבוד*, not to mention the veiling of it, is present here and not in the preceding pericope: The remarkable account of Moses and the seventy elders who beheld God while they ate and drank. An explanation for this may be something along the lines of the documentary hypothesis of Wellhausen;³⁴³ vv9-11 are of older origin, perhaps inferring the *כבוד* as a later addition to HB theology. If this is the case, we might surmise that the *כבוד* is an addition to a quite late understanding of the self-revelatory nature of YHWH. It is, however, typical of the older texts to contain the most anthropomorphic depictions of the Hebrew deity; the newer redactionist and priestly sources instead stress the sanctity of YHWH, avoiding depiction and description.³⁴⁴ Effectively the theology of a *כבוד* veiling the glory of YHWH so that it is possible for a human being to be in divine presence makes the theophany credible on a level where death otherwise would await the attendee.³⁴⁵ More on this in the walkthrough of Isa 60:1-3.

Moving to the final theophanic instance of Exodus where the *כבוד יהוה* is present, 40:33b-38, the cloud is again separate from the divine glory. The occasion is that of the inauguration of the tabernacle, and like the later event of the temple in Jerusalem, the presence of YHWH necessitates a cloud for it to descend in(to). Presumably, we might again assume that the veiling is for the sake of human attendees. However, in the priestly accounts of Exodus the verb *שכן* occurs in the two latter cases, denoting the *settling* (*שכן*) of the divine glory.

It seems clear to us, then, that the veiling of the divine was necessary for Yahwistic theology from P and onward. Mettinger discusses whether or not it was believed that the presence of YHWH was present at all times in the Tabernacle. It seems as if most of the accounts of the divine glory attributes a “settling” (*שכן*) to the place or cloud where YHWH reveals himself. Mettinger then further points out the necessity of Aron’s utilizing of incense to shroud the mercy seat from his eyes (Lev 16:2,13).³⁴⁶ He goes on to conclude that the presence was not meant to be described

³⁴³ Though the hypothesis, which will not be further discussed here, has varied support today, it has contributed much to the understanding of HB composition.

³⁴⁴ Werner H. Schmidt, *The Faith of the Old Testament: a History* (trans. John Sturdy. Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1983), 51f

³⁴⁵ Exod 33:20-23; Deut 4:33; Judg 6:22; 13:19-23; Isa 6:4.

³⁴⁶ Mettinger, Tryggve N. D., *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (CBOTS 18; Liber, 1982), 88f.

as temporary, even if some accounts speak of revelations outside the sanctuary.³⁴⁷
The כבוד is thus inherently mobile, yet its place is inside the sanctuary.

Ezekiel

The instances in Ezekiel confirm to a great extent the priestly sources of the Pentateuch. The very typical tendencies of exilic and post-exilic non-anthropomorphism correlates neatly with the idea of Ezekiel as a priest of the exile, not to mention the tradition of the book's creation. Ezek 1:4-28 manages through brilliant mastery of the language to describe the divine concretely in a very vague fashion. The reader is given the impression that the seer is plainly reluctant in his description, well in accord with this period's unwillingness to portray the divine. Ezekiel reports in v26 that what he sees has "the semblance of a throne"³⁴⁸, as he in the same way describes the entity seated on it: "the semblance of a human form"³⁴⁹. This way of describing his vision is strongly indicative of reverence to the matter at hand. It is here, at the very end of this chapter, that we encounter the first account of the כבוד יהוה of Ezekiel. According to his vision, the nature of the glory, or rather its "surrounding radiance"³⁵⁰ (note the way the author wraps it in) was shining (נגה), likened to the rainbow. As commented upon in, this imagery is reminiscent of iconography rendering Ashur in his disk (see Assyria, ch. 3.a.ii).³⁵¹

It is in the following account, Ezek 10:4, that we encounter once again the tradition of smoke (here: cloud (ענן)) filling the temple while the divine presence settles there. This time it is the temple court that the כבוד is present in, but the smoke is said to fill the entirety of the temple. Later in the same chapter the curious incident of vv18f staggers the reader. The cherubim, from whom the glory of YHWH earlier had lifted,³⁵² are back into focus, as the כבוד now returns to its earlier position above them. Now the glory of the God of Israel is positioned above the eastern gate. The deity throned "upon the cherubim" does not survive the move towards total aniconism of the Priestly tradition. As such this prophetic account, as Mettinger probably is correct

³⁴⁷ Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 89.

³⁴⁸ Here indebted to the JPS translation.

³⁴⁹ Here indebted to the JPS translation.

³⁵⁰ Here indebted to the JPS translation.

³⁵¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 122; cf. Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 104; ANEP, 180 (536).

³⁵² The divine epithet that carries this designation has a broad and early tradition: (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15; Isa 37:16; Ps 18:11; 80:2; 99:1). See further Schmidt, who links the epithet to the Ark of the Covenant: Schmidt, *Faith*, 114f.

in asserting, has its elements continued in P's placement of the cherubim inside the temple instead of under a seated deity. The כבוד, then, according to him, is in P relatively bound to the sanctuary. Thus it makes out a red thread in the Priestly accounts that goes as far back as premonarchic כבוד—conceptions of the time even before the Tabernacle.³⁵³ Ezekiel, however, draws on another tradition that to a greater extent makes room for a mobile and *enthroned* deity, thus drawing on royal Zion-theology.³⁵⁴ In regard to Ps 24 and the shrouded deity in Ps 97 the divine kingship becomes very interesting. The description of the temple court as filled with the radiance of the כבוד seems unmistakably like solar imagery.

We need also to take a look at the third movement of the divine glory, in 11:22f: The now common כבוד יהוה, is lifting itself up to the top of the east of the city: The Mount of Olives. The Ezekian account, then, is a reversal of the daily rhythm of the sun.³⁵⁵ YHWH the unportrayable is portrayed through the cloudy כבוד, comparable to a cloud making it possible to see the contours of the sun. To comment on the solar reversal, this effectively demonstrates YHWH leaving the temple as something negative; if the solar journey is an image of the unfailing, certain passing of a day, then the opposite could entail creation undone.

What would otherwise constitute panic as the deity leaves his temple is met with a solution much later on. The כבוד יהוה enters the scene again in chapter 43, in a theophanical narration of YHWH's return to Jerusalem. v2 returns us to the eastern entrance of the temple, where the כבוד אלהי (הארץ) lights up the earth, only in v4 to enter the temple. The eastern entrance we remember from 10:19 is mentioned here as the point of entering the city, and functions as such as a re-reversal of the earlier departure. Further on, v5 describes the entire temple to be filled with the כבוד, much like the cloud does in 10:4. The final mention of the כבוד is in 44:4, where Ezekiel again reports that it fills the temple. The force of which YHWH is described to enter the temple is reminiscent of Isa 59:19, particularly in its employment of flood or stream imagery and the כבוד's relation to the east (see the analysis of Isa 60:1-3).

Mettinger argues that there is what he calls a "condensation" of the term in question.³⁵⁶ While Ezekiel confirms P in its use of כבוד, the term develops, according

³⁵³ Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 113.

³⁵⁴ Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 117.

³⁵⁵ Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 108f.

³⁵⁶ Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 107.

to him, into an epithet and identification of the כבוד as YHWH himself.³⁵⁷ The main argument seems to be that the כבוד has undergone a transition from being a characteristic to the divine presence, to now in itself being the subject of verbal actions. Hence Mettinger infers that in Ezekiel, כבוד equals YHWH.³⁵⁸ In my opinion this seems a correct verdict. Yet the way this document is composed and edited, I believe there is a clear theological agenda behind the designation and its development: The need to describe YHWH the God of Israel met difficulties with the contemporary movement toward aniconism and a general reluctance of depicting the deity in any way. Mettinger would probably agree, as he terms it “aniconic cult symbolism”.³⁵⁹ Ezek 1:28aβ is an example, with its intricate sentence “such was the resemblance of the glory of YHWH”. This attests to what I will call a “double veiling” of sorts. The point was not to make new epithets or designations for YHWH, but simply to avoid a direct depiction of the deity. I would like to draw a parallel to Paul in his 1 Cor 13:12, where he likens the mortal, earthly eyesight (as restricted and imperfect) to looking in a mirror – in a riddle. I believe this to be the mindset conveyed: The doubly veiled divinity, a solution to the problem of human attendance in divine presence.

In this particular topic the theme of the cloud or the smoke employed, carefully linguistically separated from the כבוד itself, to shroud and veil the כבוד of YHWH. This hesitation makes the reader and believer twice or doubly separated from the divine; it is not YHWH himself that is veiled by the smoke, but his כבוד. In Isa 60:1-3 we saw that his glory will be seen over the faithful, employing words concerning both “dawn” and “radiance”. Thirdly, in all of the Biblical books mentioned there are narrative accounts where a *cloud* or *smoke* veils the כבוד of YHWH. Ps 97, briefly commented on above, comes to mind. YHWH is described as the king enthroned on righteousness, with clouds around him. Lipiński is probably right as he states: “There can be little doubt that the sun was conceived in Biblical times as a vivid symbol of YHWH’s Glory”.³⁶⁰ Such possible ways of linking the unapproachable deity and the sun would not diminish divine superiority over the elements, and would perhaps not even violate the aniconic tendencies of the era. This may even find parallel in the neighboring systems of belief, as over time the astral deities of other religions lost the

³⁵⁷ Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 107.

³⁵⁸ Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 107.

³⁵⁹ Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 25f.

³⁶⁰ Lipiński, *DDD* 764-768 (766).

direct association with the astral bodies and the latter became symbols of the former rather than direct manifestations (see particularly ch. 3.a.ii, under Babylonia). In light of this passage, perhaps the application of potentially solar terminology to the temple cult was meant to replace and so eradicate the non-Yahwistic *Shamash*-cults. I believe this to be the case, as the reverence of a solar YHWH both would render other solar deities useless and at the same time consolidate temple influence, cultic legislation and the old traditions of the aniconic, unportrayable YHWH, *Das ganz Andere*, of all other gods.

vi. Summary: The Hebrew Bible and its solar references

There can be no doubt that firstly, the HB indeed employs solar imagery or 'language' as means for portraying YHWH, god of Israel. Secondly, the HB references the worship of the sun along with other deities of the Near Eastern pantheons. The onomastics do not, unfortunately, offer any substantial connections. Unsurprisingly, nevertheless, light imagery does occur in connection to Yahwistic names.

Let us briefly summarize what we found in the walkthroughs of part b.i. My objective was to discuss the existence of solar imagery in older HB passages and so relate them to the later, post-exilic occurrences. This proved successful, and indeed the eight chosen passages may reflect an evolving tendency, the culmination of which may be traced in the main analysis texts. The theophanic instances of Deut 33:2 and Ps 50:1-6 both contain the concept of the divine warrior and his coming in light and other existence-shattering phenomena.³⁶¹ Both of these are probably early renderings of the coming of YHWH, likely influenced by Canaanite religion in the connection to El. This mention goes for Ps 50, but Deut 33:2 implies a connection to Sinai tradition and might very well be linked to this same origin (see below on the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscription, ch. 3.b.ii). Particularly interesting is the connection to legislation in 33:2, as we move on to the concept of righteousness.

The most important passage that concretely attributes solar imagery to royalty is 2 Sam 23:3-4. This notion is found elsewhere as well,³⁶² and have been sought to correlate directly to Mal 3:20. I have found the passage to rather *indirectly* connect to

³⁶¹ Hab 3:3; Ps 97:3f; Job 38:1 are important parallels.

³⁶² Ps 72:1-3(ff); 97 are important parallels.

the analysis texts, as the king is expected to mirror a heavenly reality on earth. No very concrete relation between royalty and the analysis texts are found. As such the solar imagery is connected to the concept of righteousness rather than royalty itself, and thus corresponds to similar Near Eastern themes (see the following chapter). YHWH expects righteousness from man, for he himself is righteous, portrayed in his luminosity. This divine notion of righteousness is confirmed by other passages treated, such as Pss 50:1-6, 76:5-10 and 84:12. Again we should keep in mind the coming of "fire, law" from YHWH's right hand in Deut 33:2. The giving of judgment and law is undoubtedly a significant factor in understanding the solar imagery of YHWH. Nevertheless, often it seems the imagery is employed to simply endow YHWH with honorable characteristics, in which sunlight or simply light played an important part. Even if all the passages may fit this description, passages like Ps 104:1-4 seem to put a particular emphasis on his luminosity, honorability and majesty. Additionally, the notion of *creatio continua* is not unimportant neither here nor in Ps 19:2-7, where the sun is explicitly put below God in rank. Both of these passages betray the conviction that the luminous deity stands above everything, including the sun, thus disassociating creator from creation. Ps 104 shows a particular connection to Egyptian religion in the Aten hymn parallels, while Ps 19 has been suggested as divulging Canaanite influence.

The eight passages given walkthroughs in the first part are in many ways connected to the vivid imagery disclosed to us in post-exilic prophecy. It goes without saying that the dating of any given passage is a delicate matter that should not be taken lightly, but I believe no very controversial assumptions have been made. We may affirm that older HB tradition carries the same kind of imagery, and indeed we may trace evolving tendencies that culminate and converge in the cases of the analysis texts. Additionally, the discussion of Near Eastern influence is, as we have seen, more than valid in the HB background for the post-exilic texts.

The six passages in part b.ii, selected for their bearing of witness to alien worship, documents Near Eastern influence in a very concrete way. By mention of a multitude of deities, specific to particular areas and rites, we may geographically locate the origin of some passages' influences. The Pentateuchal accounts, 2 Kgs 23:4f, 11f and the Joban account are inconclusive in the quest for one concrete influential source, and points to a general origin. There are many specific mentions pointing directly to West Semitic, Canaanite and Phoenician tradition, even if the

passage of 2 Kgs 21:3-6 should not be emphasized too much in “local” favor. However, the lack of overall references to Mesopotamia is astounding. The one passage that traditionally would be ascribed to Babylonian influence, Ezek 8:16, has a context that rather describes quite commonplace rites and deities of the West Semitic region. This passage has, at least, scholarly support as Mesopotamian in influence.

Subchapter iii, treating the onomastics of the HB, is annoyingly inconclusive. The few examples do not give away neither a specifically solar rendering of YHWH, or reference to the sun in particular. Rather, there is a focus on his luminous and possibly legislative character, like Pss 76:5-10 and 104.

The excursi both articulate aspects of the solar or luminous portrayal of YHWH. The first consider the salvific intervention expected at daybreak, while the second involve the concept of divine glory and how it is portrayed in a variety of passages. They are, like the analysis texts and the eight passages considered in 2.b.i, strains of the same notion of a deity that comes to save or aid *by, as or in* light. The light of the sun is the preferred kind of model for these texts (but not all, as we have seen), and as such we succeed here in giving sufficient examples of HB solar imagery, and how they have theological implications for the HB. In chapter 3 I will investigate how the ancient Near Eastern cultures related to the concepts found and surveyed in chapter 2. In doing this I will trace threads back to ancient Israel and the HB, just as this chapter anticipates much from the following.

2.c. Summary of chapter 2: The salvific intervention of YHWH

As the dissertational vantage point suggests, I will in the coming section seek out a possible ancient Near Eastern origin. To be precise, this entails a history of religions examination focused on the area of the ANE. First of all, however, we need to examine the findings from the exegetical walkthrough. As stated in this chapter's introduction, my intention is not to answer the question posed in its title. Rather, the question anticipates a discussion of feasible backgrounds for the solar imagery. Hebrew biblical imagery was, just as that of any other civilization, subject to external influence, and did not surface in a vacuum.

The question of “dangerous association”, association that might compromise a monolatrous theocracy as the one the HB recounts, is one of immense importance.

The walkthroughs do not address this issue directly, but adds to our perception of this problematic trait. Why and how were statements such as these an integral and accepted part of Yahwistic theology? Perhaps the answer is simply that the intended effect was the direct opposite: If YHWH contained the abilities of the sun there was no need for a separate deity. The same might perhaps be said about the thunderous capacities of YHWH portrayed in some theophanic pericopae; they are reminiscent of those of Ba'al. Is the lesson here that the abilities and characteristics of different foreign deities were added to the God of Israel to prevent their influence on the people? Perhaps the scribes and theologians intended that the Israelite would not feel the need of Shapash or Atum if their abilities were contained in YHWH. We see here, then, a possibility of assimilation as counteractive to foreign influence: A sort of controlled syncretism in an all-encompassing YHWH. This is of particular interest if we consider the possible context of Isa 60: Post-exilic Israel fighting off the sway of many years of gentile hegemony. Maintaining that the purpose of the "solarisms" is polemical in nature, they probably speak against a long tradition of sun-revering cultism found in practically every culture in the Near East. If the accounts of e.g. Kings are correct, there was nothing original about solar cultism, as it even was propagated by royalty.

It is in view of the polemical pericopae that it needs be considered that the application of solar imagery in HB tradition is of older local origin. It was inherent in the pre-Mosaic culture that survived for many centuries in Samaria and Judah. Worship of Ba'al and celestial beings are attested there even up until the time of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:5), and in all likelihood it thrived in Palestine during the exile as well. In support of this view the exilic (or later) composition of Ezekiel could be considered. 8:16 attests a solar worship séance in the vestibules of the temple. The pericope thus would aim at disapproval of the non-Yahwistic cultic activities of Judah by locating traditional Canaanite worship in the Jerusalem temple. The not unambiguous circumstance of Ezek 8:16 could, however, serve as an argument for external influence as well. When it comes to solar cultism, the practice of which was mainstream in the entire Near East, the problem is that we know very little of how it was performed. If my assumption is right, the mentioned passage serves as a credible testimony of a fairly regular rite. The very general description (prostration in the sun's direction) potentially matches any given solar cult in the area, be it Canaanite or Mesopotamian in origin. For all we know, Ezekiel might here describe a

rite known to him from the exilic circumstances in Babylon. However, see the following chapter for more on this.

Chapter 3:

The ancient Near East as background for Hebrew biblical solar imagery

The thesis on which this dissertation is based requests the expounding of a potential ancient Near Eastern background to the solar imagery employed in the analyses provided in chapter 2. My hope is that the presentation below will shed light on such imagery, in revealing possibilities of a foreign background for the Hebrew application of this kind of figurative language. In chapter 2 the main focus was the Hebrew sources, but some ANE material was included already there. In this part the main focus is the neighboring cultures of ancient Israel and more or less plausible solutions for the occurrence of solar imagery in the HB.

My literary choices include a range of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Syro-Palestinian/Phoenician and Persian literature. The application of these is, inevitably, of varying quality and viability. The inclusion of Sumerian religion in this dissertation might seem out of place, as the empire of Sumer crumbled over a millennium before the rise of Davidian Israel. However, made known to us from a variety of sources, it displays an early example of a solar connection to the concept of kingship and righteousness; one that seems to remain valid throughout the age of primary religion. Hence, the reason for including it is to show a persistent ANE tendency of considering righteousness a solar quality. Similarly, the Egyptian culture is at least as old as the Sumerian, but remained for a long time after Sumerian decline. Thus, Egyptian influence seems more interesting as temporally proximate to Israelite culture (not to mention the HB connections between the two). Generally, the most important criteria for inclusion are similarities with the HB sources. Justification or disqualification of the respective sources' viability is given in their presentation. Criteria of inclusion are basically reference to solar deities in connection with kingship, the concept of righteousness and similarities or other contact points to the initial analysis texts. Exclusion will similarly be based on irreconcilable cultural, geographical and temporal differences. The order of the investigated sources is basically chronological, but for the sake of continuity and coherence the

Mesopotamian empires are presented from Sumer and all the way to the Neo-Babylonians. It starts with Egypt, then Mesopotamia, Syria-Palestine, Hittite Anatolia and lastly the Achaemenid Empire.

As the second part of chapter 3, I discuss the archaeological findings of ancient Israel and consider them in relation to what we have found already in the HB and in the neighboring systems of belief. It is not only objects that are taken into account, but also onomastics, like in ch. 2.b.iii, so that we may speculate whether extrabiblical names of theophory tell us anything of this area's religious inclinations.

3.a. The sun and its relations to kingship and righteousness in ancient Near Eastern religion

i. Egypt

The head of the Egyptian pantheon was almost exclusively always the sun god. Egyptian mythos and religion allowed for great changes in its structure over time. Though at times Horus replaces Re, and later Osiris replaces Horus as head of the Enneads, functions seem to be inherited even though names were to change. Indeed 3000 years of Egyptian literature attest to creation as an act of the omnipotent solar god.³⁶³ From the 18th dynasty (1550-1350 BCE), but probably of earlier date, is available a hymn to Amon-Re, praising it for the benevolence shown towards the land of Egypt.³⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the idea of kingship as connected to the sun could find an origin as early as the second dynasty (2890-2686 BCE)³⁶⁵, when the title "son of Re" is applied to a king.³⁶⁶ On the contemporary temple of Hatshepsut, but probably originating as early as the Middle Kingdom (2025-1700 BCE)^{367, 368} is preserved an incredibly informative text regarding the king's clerical office as sun-priest.³⁶⁹ The following is an excerpt from the cited Assmann's translation.

"1 King N.N.

2 worships Re at dawn

3 at his appearance, when he opens his ball

³⁶³ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 23.

³⁶⁴ "A Hymn to Amon-Re," translated by John A. Wilson (*ANET*, 365).

³⁶⁵ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 128.

³⁶⁶ Rosalie David, *Cult of the Sun: Myth and Magic in Ancient Egypt* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1980), 34.

³⁶⁷ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 12.

³⁶⁸ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 17.

³⁶⁹ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 18 (quoted text: 19-21).

4 and flies up to heaven as Khepry [...]
 7 at his birth in the eastern part of the sky
 8 His father Osiris raises him on high,
 9 the arms of Huh and Hauhet receive him,
 10 he takes his place in the Day Boat [...]
 31 Re has installed the King N.N. [...]
 34 to administer justice to human beings and satisfy the gods,
 35 to fulfill Ma'at and annihilate injustice"³⁷⁰

This text reveals that the king's office is based on the worship of the sun as god. Described here is a rite of prayer to be performed by the king at dawn. The reference to the "Day Boat" points to the divine vehicle of the daily solar journey.³⁷¹ This travel is strongly tied to royal and judicial power,³⁷² which particularly comes to light in the slaying of the chaos monster Apophis.³⁷³ The travel of the sun involved setting and ascending into the underworld.³⁷⁴ This chthonic nature of the sun god is revealed in the second part of the text above, and further emphasizes the healing and life-giving abilities of the travelling deity: "People come to life when they see him".³⁷⁵ From the royal focus of these texts it is certain to us that pharaohs proclaimed themselves as legitimate sons of the sun-god; a state sun-cult had come into existence, and there was little distinction between king and deity.³⁷⁶ Additionally, kingship should, like the divine,³⁷⁷ uncompromisingly seek to uphold Ma'at (what is right, not unlike the Hebrew word for truth, אמת)³⁷⁸ and to eradicate its opposite, "injustice". This was the manner of which creation was reenacted every morning in ritual acts performed by the king.³⁷⁹ The further existence of creation was contingent on these rituals. The concept of Ma'at, more than comparable to the biblical concept of righteousness, is personified in the goddess-daughter of Re.³⁸⁰ A coffin text from the early Middle

³⁷⁰ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 19f.

³⁷¹ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 44-47.

³⁷² Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 49.

³⁷³ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 53.

³⁷⁴ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 20 (lines 1-6).

³⁷⁵ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 21 (line 24), cf. 20 (lines 7f).

³⁷⁶ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 18f.

³⁷⁷ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 50.

³⁷⁸ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 33.

³⁷⁹ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 58.

³⁸⁰ Charles Russell Coulter and Patricia Turner, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000), 298f.

Kingdom reveals her place in the obscure Egyptian traditions of creation: Out of nothingness the creative solar force materializes, bringing with it the primary necessities of an ordered universe: Ankh (life) and Ma'at (What is right).³⁸¹ These two were the ground elements associated with Shu (air, dryness) and Tefnut (water, moistness).³⁸² Thus the importance of Ma'at as cosmic order and basic principle of existence should not be doubted.

An extreme example of ritual performance was Amenhotep III, who made an artificial lake next to his palace in order to recreate the solar journey in an as literal way as possible.³⁸³ In this he, while still alive, claimed the title as sun god.³⁸⁴ According to the *Life of Sanehat*, only at the king's death unification between sun and king occurs.³⁸⁵ Hence, the Egyptian state cult defined the pharaoh as the "next in line" in a solar lineage. As a side note, Amenhotep III paved way for his son in what was later considered as the "great heresy" of ancient Egyptian history.³⁸⁶ The rule of Akhenaten (1364-1347 (1352-1336) BCE)³⁸⁷ effectively replaced the entire traditional Egyptian pantheon with a cult of the sun disc, the Aten, of which the pharaoh was the incarnation.³⁸⁸ The Amarna Letters, inscribed on a great number of clay tablets found at the site of Akhetaten, attest in particular to this reign and period of time. Akhenaten is the addressee of a great deal of the letters, in many of which he is referred to as "my Sun-god" or "my pantheon" in addition to the other obligatory royal addresses.³⁸⁹ The Hymn to the Aten, which we saw in the treatment of Ps 104, is an example of a text with solar applications that very closely resembles a biblical account. But here arise difficult questions, like the one Dion poses: "...how indeed could a Hebrew psalmist have known about texts inscribed on the walls of rock-cut tombs of distant Akhet-Aten?"³⁹⁰ This we cannot answer, but we may ask another question: If *some* solar material made it through to the Hebrew canon, is it not reasonable that there is more? Very plausibly, Egypt is a decent guess at a background for much of the biblical solar imagery. Unfortunately we cannot go any further in the very interesting

³⁸¹ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 33.

³⁸² Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 33; cf. Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 80.

³⁸³ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 150.

³⁸⁴ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 150.

³⁸⁵ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 20.

³⁸⁶ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 144.

³⁸⁷ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:195.

³⁸⁸ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:201.

³⁸⁹ "The Amarna Letters," translated by W. F. Albright (*ANET*, 485-490).

³⁹⁰ Dion, P. E., "YHWH as Storm-god and Sun-god," 59.

“solar monotheism” of Akhenaten.³⁹¹

In addition to the *re-enacting* rites, performances of sacrificial rites were also obligatory at the court; the main offer of the earthly king to the sun deity was *righteousness*. Very likely, the king raised an image of the personified Ma'at to the dawning sun.³⁹² This quite close relation between royalty, righteousness and deity may well have been part of a quite standardized perception of early monarchy in the ancient Near East. The king, as responsible of lawmaking, justice and welfare, had an immediate connection to the concept of righteousness as something divinely ordained and expected. As the divine sun was righteous in all its ways, the earthly king was to mirror this perfection. The people expected the king to rule justly, even if this early form of kingship was totalitarian and to our modern times would resemble despotism. On a Ramesside stele over half of the space is spent on explaining how the quarrymen and stoneworkers were paid properly for their work.³⁹³ Obviously a lot of emphasis has been laid on appropriate royal conduct. The righteous character of the sun deity may be exemplified by the following lines:

“I judge between the poor and the rich
I do the same against wrongdoers
Life is mine. I am the owner of it
The sceptre will not be taken from my hand.”³⁹⁴

Additionally, a focus on helping the oppressed emerges from this verse:

“Who saves the miserable from the hand of the violent,
who rescues the child who has no father or mother (...)
His abomination is fraud,
the just one who annihilates injustice
in his name “lord of Maat”.”³⁹⁵

Corresponding ideas of divine kingship occur frequently in the Near Eastern region, to different degrees and variations. In comparison, the enthroned king of Judah could be considered the son of God by adoption (2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:7; 89:27-28). Egyptian

³⁹¹ See, however, David, *Cult of the Sun*, 158-193; Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 143-170.

³⁹² Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 41, 59f, cf. the hymn recounted in Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 32-34. See particularly ANEP, 191 (572), where King Seti I performs this rite before Thoth.

³⁹³ Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 77.

³⁹⁴ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 125.

³⁹⁵ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 201.

influence may be traced in the words of 2 Sam 23:3-4. Especially in conjunction with the נָדִיִק (adj.), “righteous” (as a manner of ruling), in v3 this is interesting. Either way righteousness is a prerequisite for kingship. Names like Zedekiah, Melchizedek, and also the priestly name Zadok attest the concept high in regard as an indispensable leader-quality and principle.

Additionally, the healing properties of the sun god are striking. In the third analysis text, Mal 3:20, the “sun of righteousness” is said to have “healing in its wings”. In considering the salvific motif of the prophetic passage, then, the description above will similarly describe a travelling deity with both a salvific and a healing agenda. Also, the therapeutic authority of Isis is called upon for the solar protection in the underworld: “The healing power of Isis permeates your limbs”.³⁹⁶ Similarly, a hymn to Amon-Re as a healer recounts this same notion of a healing god.³⁹⁷ There is ample evidence of this elsewhere as well.³⁹⁸

One needs here to mention the winged sun disk that is so prominent in Egyptian art. Of course, it is prominent elsewhere as well, but as we will see, it has its roots in Egypt. As mentioned already in chapter 2, it is unavoidable to draw parallels to it in the Mal 3:20 mention of a sun with wings. We will, however, treat it further below, in chapter 3.b.i, and compare other regions' symbolism connected to it.

Finally, as we have seen, there is no doubt about the significance of righteousness as a core value of Egyptian society. In art, we find the base of the throne of pharaoh is constructed on top of letters composing the word “Ma’at”.³⁹⁹ This finds striking correspondence with Prov 16:12 and Isa 9:6(f),⁴⁰⁰ and the traditions very likely relate to each other in some way. The divine righteousness, which the king was expected to mirror, should be interpreted as salvation. This is the case in the above-cited passage, and very much the tendency in the analysis texts as well. Additionally, the thought of aiding the poor, orphans or otherwise underprivileged, is definitely a biblical issue as well.⁴⁰¹ These concepts were naturally qualities assigned to many deities, but none as frequent as Amon-Re.

³⁹⁶ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 58f; Cf., for more on the subject, Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 59.

³⁹⁷ “The God Amon as Healer and Magician,” translated by John A. Wilson (*ANET*, 369); Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 85.

³⁹⁸ See particularly Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 60f.

³⁹⁹ Ringgren and Johnson, *TDOT* XII:241.

⁴⁰⁰ Ringgren and Johnson, *TDOT* XII:255.

⁴⁰¹ Exod 22:21; Deut 10:17f; 24:17; 27:19; Pss 10:17f; 82:3 etc.

ii. Mesopotamia

Ancient Sumer

Connections to royalty or kingship may also be found in the Sumerian traditions. The mythic Enmerkar, king of Uruk, is said to be "son of the sun god".⁴⁰² He is responsible for the rites of the temple, and may resemble the Egyptian pharaoh in his role as both priest and king.⁴⁰³ A morning ritual of the Sumerian temples included a court setting imitating the council of Gods gathering in the rising radiance of the god of righteousness.⁴⁰⁴ This strongly ties the sun god to decision-making and other court settings where fairness should preside. As long as the sun shone, events would be out in the open; justice would prevail. Furthermore, the divinely appointed king acts as protector of the weaker part of the populace. An edict of the king Urukagina (about 2350)⁴⁰⁵, quite similar to Biblical legal demands,⁴⁰⁶ decrees that the widow and the orphan are individuals who should enjoy protection from usury.⁴⁰⁷

In much the same way as in Egypt the religion of Sumer acknowledged the sun god, Utu,⁴⁰⁸ as being in charge of fairness and justice. The Sumerian empire and its culture may have disintegrated and/or melted into other nations, but the mythos of their old religion remained in both Assyrian and Babylonian tradition for millennia to come. Enki, the earth-god, placed Utu in charge of boundaries both on heaven and earth, symbolizing him being in charge of a universal law that applied to everyone.⁴⁰⁹ Like in the Egyptian religion, the sun's daily journey across the sky is emphasized; he is bringer of light and enemy of the dark. In the morning he defends humans in their lawsuits against evildoers, and at night he upholds justice among the dead in the netherworld.⁴¹⁰ He is the father of Hendursaga, "maintainer of order" and "recognizer of fair statements".⁴¹¹ In a speech by Ninurta it is proclaimed: "*May Utu's office be your sacred office, righting as judge all countries.*"⁴¹² From the Epic of Gilgamesh

⁴⁰² Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...: Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 282.

⁴⁰³ Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...*, 277.

⁴⁰⁴ Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...*, 418.

⁴⁰⁵ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:27.

⁴⁰⁶ Exod 22:21; Deut 10:17f; 24:17; 27:19; Pss 10:17f; 82:3 etc.

⁴⁰⁷ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:39.

⁴⁰⁸ An ideogram, the pronunciation of which is uncertain but probably relates to the Hebrew שֶׁשׁ (Lipiński, *TDOT* XV:306).

⁴⁰⁹ Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976), 85.

⁴¹⁰ Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 134.

⁴¹¹ Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...*, 132.

⁴¹² Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...*, 261.

(written in Akkadian: Here Utu equals *šamšum*, similar to Hebrew שמש)⁴¹³ he is known as the advocate of righteousness. He comes to the rescue when the chief deity and wind god⁴¹⁴ Enlil demands that Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu be put to death for murder.⁴¹⁵ There is also the story of Dumuzi (Tammuz) which, as the groom of Inanna, appeals to Utu as brother-in-law. As he is taken captive, he lifts his hands towards heaven and appeals to the sun god for help. Utu responds by turning Dumuzi into first a gazelle and then a snake so that he may escape.⁴¹⁶ Utu is also relevant to ordinary people, as he hears them in court sessions against demons. Another tale tells of how he hears the cry of an orphaned girl and because of it causes the earth to swallow Gilgamesh' toys.⁴¹⁷ As a side note, the Akkadian ideogram of Utu is a disk emerging from between two mountain tops,⁴¹⁸ and as such it interestingly displays an early pictorial representation of the solar deity.

Utu, sun god of righteousness, stands out as the protector of the meek, restrainer of Enlil's rage and the reasonable judge. These characteristics portray the Sumerian sun-god as the protector of the ones unable to protect themselves. He is by no means the always-acquitting lord of forbearance, but rather a mild deity that applies to the believer's common sense. The distress call of the orphaned girl is the prime example of the all-enclosing capabilities of Utu. As seated on the celestial pinnacles he sees everything and might be called upon by anyone. The morning rituals tell the modern reader that his presence was wanted in decisions regarding justice, both metaphorically and literally shedding light where obscurity dominated.

Babylonia

Sumeria as an empire vanished because of Akkadian invasion, among other things. Its culture merged with the Akkadian, and seeped through the pores of time and well into the later Babylonian and Assyrian culture. Ancient Mesopotamia continued the religious and political traditions of divinely appointed kingship. An interesting parallel to the mentioned edict of Urukagina we find in the statements of king Ammisaduqa

⁴¹³ Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 6.

⁴¹⁴ Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...*, xv.

⁴¹⁵ Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 202.

⁴¹⁶ Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once...*, 40.

⁴¹⁷ Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, 134.

⁴¹⁸ Corinne Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire Shamash dans le Monde Phénico-Punique" *SEL* 6 (1989): 97-115. 106f.

(1647-1625 BCE)⁴¹⁹, 10th in line in the Hammurabian dynasty. As was customary at throne ascensions and similar monarchic displays, the ruler was to issue decrees of justice and goodwill towards the populace (bearing some similarity to the obscure Year of the Jubilee, Lev 25:8-11).⁴²⁰ This act was called a *mišarum*, and in the particular case of Ammisaduqa it relates to economical concerns: Remittance of debts and ceasing of corruption.⁴²¹ Now, in this edict we encounter a remarkable example of the now frequently attested theme: Divinely appointed kingship rooted in establishment of justice and righteousness. The translation of Finkelstein reads:

*“Year: Ammisaduqa the king, Enlil having magnified his noble lordship, like Shamash he rose forth in steadfastness over his country, and instituted justice for the whole of his people.”*⁴²²

Not only is the kingship divinely ordained, the example and justification for the king's actions are significant in their mirroring of the solar steadfastness. In the quoted text Enlil, chief god and corresponding to Ashur, Baal and other storm gods of the ANE, is the guarantor of the king's nobility and the enabler of his actions. Shamash is the divinity whose characteristics the king must emulate. Two elements of solar quality are brought forth, then: Firstly, in the steadfastness of the daily solar journey across the sky, and secondly in the institution of justice. Still the most important of Babylonian kings, Hammurabi (1792-1749)⁴²³, reigned 150 years before Ammisaduqa, and is the king under which the famous *Codex Hammurabi* came to existence. Preserved on a diorite stele⁴²⁴ and other sources (clay tablets) it has survived the centuries and has undoubtedly had an impact on legislation everywhere, including ancient Israel.⁴²⁵ The stele mentioned is a beautiful piece of art which on its top includes an image of Hammurabi, receiving the law from Shamash.⁴²⁶ A more concrete illustration of divinely commissioned law could hardly be done, and might remind the Bible reader of Moses on top of Sinai. Here are some lines from the

⁴¹⁹ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1: 99.

⁴²⁰ Introduction to “The Edict of Ammisaduqa,” translated by J. J. Finkelstein (*ANET*, 526).

⁴²¹ Introduction to “The Edict of Ammisaduqa,” translated by J. J. Finkelstein (*ANET*, 526).

⁴²² “The Edict of Ammisaduqa,” translated by J. J. Finkelstein (*ANET*, 526-528).

⁴²³ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*. 1:99.

⁴²⁴ *ANEP*, 77 (246).

⁴²⁵ David P. Wright, *Inventing God's Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

⁴²⁶ Introduction to “The Code of Hammurabi,” translated by Theophile J. Meek (*ANET*, 163f); *ANEP*, 76f (244, 246).

introduction to the law text:

“When lofty Anum, king of the Annunaki,
 (and) Enlil, lord of heaven and earth, [...]

determined for Marduk, the first-born of Enki, [...]

established for him in its midst an enduring kingship,

at that time Anum and Enlil named me to promote the welfare of the people,

me, Hammurabi, the devout, god-fearing prince,

to cause justice to prevail in the land,

to destroy the wicked and the evil,

that the strong might not oppress the weak,

to rise like the sun over the black-headed (people),

and to light up the land.

Hammurabi, the shepherd, called by Enlil, am I;”⁴²⁷

From the epilogue:

“The laws of justice, which Hammurabi, the efficient king, set up,
 and by which he caused the land to take the right way and have good
 government.

I, Hammurabi, the perfect king [...]

I caused light to shine on them [the people] [...]

By the order of Shamash, the great judge of heaven and earth,
 may my justice prevail in the land [...]

I, Hammurabi, am the king of justice,
 to whom Shamash committed law. [...]

the king of justice;

May he shepherd his people in justice!”⁴²⁸

The Hammurabian Code betrays a confident connection between the idea of legislation as divinely commissioned and the shedding of light upon its subjects. As such the king is not only emulating the judicial side of Shamash, but also the solar in the rising and the shining. The imagery seems clearer than in any other instance, and HB passages like Deut 33:2 and 2 Sam 23:3-4 easily comes to mind, in their

⁴²⁷ “The Code of Hammurabi,” translated by Theophile J. Meek (*ANET*, 163-180 (164)).

⁴²⁸ “The Code of Hammurabi,” translated by Theophile J. Meek (*ANET*, 163-180 (178)).

concrete correlation of solar character with lawgiving and kingship, respectively.

As we have seen, kingship truly was rooted in the image of Shamash; even the throne ascension was likened to the rising of the sun. The dawning of Shamash and the upsurge of justice is equal to the rising and shedding light of the natural sun. It is in this double aspect we may note a development in viewing Shamash as god of righteousness and as the sun at the same time. In this later stage of Mesopotamian religion the anthropomorphic qualities of the astral deities were emphasized, while the visible objects in the sky came to be symbols and not necessarily “god-bodies” in themselves.⁴²⁹ Utu of Sumer may have given way to the Akkadian Shamash, but the difference seems to be a nominal one. The adaptation of the name Shamash for both sun and solar deity prevailed throughout the entirety of Mesopotamia and even survived into modern day Hebrew (of course, only as the designation for the common sun). As seen in the aforementioned edict, Enlil always remains chief deity,⁴³⁰ while Shamash is the portrayed means by which his will is enacted.

Still, the most important deity in Iron Age Mesopotamia was Marduk, rising to prominence as a greater deity under Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104 BCE).⁴³¹ He appears as the hero of the Akkadian creation epic *Enūma Eliš*. In this epic there are solar characteristics being assigned to him,⁴³² as is also seen with Ashur as he replaces Marduk in the Assyrian versions. Not only “brightly glowed his features like the day”⁴³³ when adorers of his wanted to build him a temple, but in one of the stanzas it is declared:

“Truly, the Son of the Sun, most radiant of gods is he. In his brilliant light may they walk forever!”⁴³⁴

Marduk was perhaps more associated with the sun than the texts surviving today will admit. His name is frequently translated “calf of the sun”,⁴³⁵ but Abusch disagrees with this translation on the fragile basis that “Marduk is not a solar deity”.⁴³⁶ This view

⁴²⁹ McKay, *Religion in Judah*, 48.

⁴³⁰ With the exception, perhaps, of Marduk (though at a later stage).

⁴³¹ Tzvi Abusch, “Marduk מֶרְדֻךְ,” *DDD* 543-549 (545f); His position as chief deity did not become fixed until at least the first millennium BCE. Cf. Abusch' discussion.

⁴³² “The Creation Epic,” (*ANET*, 60-72 (Tablet I, lines 101f)).

⁴³³ “The Creation Epic,” (*ANET*, 60-72 (Tablet V:56)).

⁴³⁴ “The Creation Epic,” (*ANET*, 60-72 (Tablet VI, lines 128f)).

⁴³⁵ Hans Wilhelm Haussig, *Wörterbuch der Mythologie: Band I: Götter und Mythen im Vorderen Orient* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1966), 96 suggests “Jungrind des Sonnengottes”.

⁴³⁶ Abusch, *DDD* 543.

is contested, however, as some would argue that his original character was indeed solar.⁴³⁷ Additionally, he is also mentioned as a healer,⁴³⁸ and might invoke the rare connection to solar healing (Mal 3:20), but then again remedial abilities are not unusual traits for a deity.

Assyria

Later Mesopotamian history brings to us the famous vassal treaty of Esarhaddon (680-669)⁴³⁹, which has brought to light many important aspects of the old Assyrian empire. It describes Esarhaddon's will imposed on the vassal nations made subject to him. As was common for this kind of treaty, gods of both subject and ruler were invoked to make sure the treaty was honored. In this case, a great number of gods are included with their respective punishment to a violator of the treaty. Shamash is included here, and Wiseman translates:

“May Shamash, the light of heaven and earth, not give you a fair and equitable judgment, may he take away your eyesight; walk about in darkness!”⁴⁴⁰

There can, at least, be no doubt that a continued Mesopotamian tradition of solar righteousness was present in the mind of the Neo-Assyrian as well. This may be solidly confirmed as the perhaps most well-known hymn to a sun deity was found in the legendary libraries of Esarhaddon's issue, Ashurbanipal.⁴⁴¹ It is frequently referred to as “the Shamash Hymn”,⁴⁴² and ten of its 200 lines are included here:

“19 Your splendour covers the vast mountains,
20 Your fierce light fills the lands to their limits,
23 You care for all the peoples of the lands,
24 And everything that Ea, king of the counselors, had created is entrusted to
you.
101 A circumspect judge who pronounces just verdicts
102 Controls the palace and lives among the princes

⁴³⁷ Marjorie Leach, *Guide to the Gods* (ed. Michael Owen Jones and Frances Maybell Cattermole-Tally; Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 1992) 46f, 113; Coulter and Turner, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities*, 309.

⁴³⁸ Leach, *Guide to the Gods*, 113; Morgenstern, “The King-God,” 150.

⁴³⁹ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:479.

⁴⁴⁰ “The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon,” translated by D. J. Wiseman (*ANET*, 534-541 (lines 422-424)).

⁴⁴¹ Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), 122.

⁴⁴² Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, 126-138; For comparison: “The Shamash Hymn,” translated by Benjamin Foster (*COS* 1.117:418f); “Hymn to the Sun-God,” translated by Ferris J. Stephens (*ANET* 387-389).

- 132 The feeble man calls you from the hollow of his mouth
 133 The humble, the weak, the afflicted, the poor
 174 Which are the mountains not clothed with your beams?
 175 Which are the regions not warmed by the brightness of your light?"⁴⁴³

The entire hymn is swelling with praise to the solar deity, first and foremost for his benevolence towards creation. 19f are examples of praise on combined grounds of beauty and omnipresence. Other strophes, like 101f and others, emphasize his office as judge in giving "just verdicts", and duly tie it to the palace "among the princes". Further the ones who call out to Shamash are the "feeble man", "the humble, the weak, the afflicted, the poor"; this finds close resemblance with our earlier observations on protection of the needy. The last stichs I have included returns to the subject of beauty, though joined by issues important to agriculture and basic necessities of light and warmth. Like in the Codex Hammurabi, clear parallels to biblical law occur. If we are not simply dealing with a common background, there is in any case a high probability of Hebrew biblical adoption of judicial themes. Along with legislation come the monarchy and its divine sanction, and this may be a suitable background for solar imagery as such.

McKay, among others, ushered in what might be called a paradigm shift in the understanding of Assyrian imposition of policies. In his *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians* he showed that there is no Biblical grounds for assuming that Mesopotamian religion were forced upon the Assyrian vassals by Esarhaddon and his dynasty. His predecessors had maintained, understandably, that such an obligation would explain the heresy of 2 Kings and other attestation of, among other things, astral worship (see ch. 2.b.ii). However, evidence of such mandatory adopted religion has not been found, neither in Biblical nor Assyrian sources.⁴⁴⁴

It is nevertheless irresponsible to move on without mentioning the Assyrian chief deity and his semi-frequent correlation with the sun deity. It was not uncommon for heads of pantheons to accumulate other deities' powers, as was the case with Ashur. In a fragment of painted brick he is represented in a fiery solar disk with a human torso, but with a considerable wingspan and a giant feathery tail.⁴⁴⁵ Zimmerli,

⁴⁴³ Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, 126-137.

⁴⁴⁴ McKay, *Religion in Judah*, 65f.

⁴⁴⁵ ANEP, 180 (536).

in his commentary of Ezekiel, associates this with the presentation of the divine כבוד described in Ezek 1:28, and attributes to Ezekiel a Mesopotamian source for his rendering.⁴⁴⁶

Neo-Babylonia

Next in line to dominate this entire area was the so-called Neo-Babylonians. Nabopalassar (626-605 BCE)⁴⁴⁷ ascended the throne of Babylon in 626 BCE, and soon the empire reached new heights in the conquests of his son Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BCE)^{448, 449}. This reign impacted Judah tremendously, particularly in the sieges, plundering of Jerusalem in 597 BCE and 587 BCE,⁴⁵⁰ and of course the exile. The Neo-Babylonian Empire definitely inherited the traits of its earlier empires, and we will include a passage from a legal text considering the judgment of a traitor:

“...In those days Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the judicious prince, shepherd of the widespread people, who like the sun-god oversees the totality of the lands, who determines right and justice, who destroy evildoers and criminals, examined the evil deeds of Baba-aha-iddina and brought his conspiracy to naught. He established that he had committed the despicable deed in the assembly of the people; angrily he looked upon him. ‘No life’ he spoke for him and his throat was cut...”⁴⁵¹

This gruesome, yet vivid account pronounces the same proclivities towards solar righteousness as the Mesopotamian reigns of the past. Nebuchadnezzar II undoubtedly sees himself in the same line of kings as Hammurabi, reigning over a millennium earlier. It seems reasonable to maintain that throughout history a red thread of Mesopotamian solar righteousness has functioned as a cornerstone for legislation and royal executive power inside and outside of the area.

We are well aware that some biblical material stems directly from Babylonian influence, and certainly the exile paved the way for Mesopotamian sway in the Hebrew canon collection. The imagery of a divinely appointed king with solar features can hardly be coincidental. The Hebrews drew on earlier civilizations' manner of

⁴⁴⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 122.

⁴⁴⁷ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:592.

⁴⁴⁸ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:592.

⁴⁴⁹ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:589-592.

⁴⁵⁰ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:591f.

⁴⁵¹ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:595.

describing their monarchs, and the image of the sun was no exception. But as we have seen, it need not be the Babylonians that provided this influence. We know that such imagery was alive and well two millennia before Nebuchadnezzar II.

iii. Syria-Palestine

This part contains examples from Ugarit and Phoenicia. It needs be noted here that “Syria-Palestine” as a designation for the two is, admittedly, simplifying at best. We know little of the religion in the entire area of Palestine and South-western Syria, but we know they share a common figure in the Canaanite Baal, frequently attested to in the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus these, Ugarit and Phoenicia, function as case examples from a large area that suffers from a lack of better documentation. The content of this subchapter is, admittedly, general and superficial. If one excuses the simplifications, I believe this small survey into the given areas might shed light on our HB sources.

Ugarit

In the Ugaritic literature (about 1400-1200 BCE)⁴⁵² the presence of š pš occurs, known to us as the Canaanite sun goddess Shapash (Šapšu). In the important *Baal/Anat Cycle*, she is vaguely portrayed, but when present, she acts as counsel and help to other gods. Both Baal-Hadad (*Ba^clu-Haddu*) and Mot (*Môtu-Šarru*), bitter opponents in this tale of combat for dominion, is spoken to by her.⁴⁵³ The account is reminiscent of the more well-known rivalry of Horus and Seth. In the Baal Cycle accounts, she is frequently referred to as “the divine lamp”⁴⁵⁴ or “great light”, much similar to Gen 1:16.⁴⁵⁵ Her character as sun has obvious transcendental and omniscient features,⁴⁵⁶ as her mission often is to inform the unknowing. For example, she reveals to the deity Athtar the will of El. Athtar wants kingship, but El wants to give it to Yam, and the sun goddess acts here as counsel to the disgruntled Athtar.⁴⁵⁷ Smith calls her office “divine messenger” and underlines her acts as mediator,⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵² Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:300.

⁴⁵³ Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion* (trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 53.

⁴⁵⁴ KTU 1.2 III 15 (Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I*, 219).

⁴⁵⁵ Mark S. Smith and Wayne T. Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal cycle. Volume II. Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU/CAT 1.3-1.4* (VTSup 114; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 345f.

⁴⁵⁶ del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 52.

⁴⁵⁷ KTU 1.2 III 15-18 (Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I*, 219).

⁴⁵⁸ Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I*, xxiii; cf. Bonnet, “Le Dieu Solaire.” 107.

while del Olmo Lete emphasizes her effect as being that of “persuasion” and “counsel” of wisdom.⁴⁵⁹ Another important office she holds is connected to her bringing the spirits of the dead to the netherworld.⁴⁶⁰ Like in the Egyptian tradition, then, the sun deity is expected to spend the night in Hades.

She is certainly not an overrepresented deity in the Ugaritic texts known to us, but the contours are clearly those of a deity affiliated with counsel and truth. It would be a stretch to call the Canaanite Shapash a sun god of righteousness, but there are no doubt similarities to the other sun deities of the Near East. The solar qualities are definitely downplayed if compared to the other religions of this time. In a statistics made by del Olmo Lete, based on the findings of modern archaeology, the sun goddess ranks 9th when it comes to cult sacrifices made. On top, naturally El/Dagon, Baal-Hadad and Anat preside.⁴⁶¹ The sun goddess was no primary object of veneration in Ugarit, and no very palpable connection to neither the concept of righteousness nor kingship can be found. From the scattered sources we have, instead emerges an image of a deity more resembling the Greek Hermes in the conveyance of messages.

It is more than probable, however, that El took on solar capacity in many settings.⁴⁶² As we have seen already, this is not an uncommon trait for chief deities. Smith informs of an Ugaritic stele in which the winged sun disk appears alongside the enthroned El.⁴⁶³ In light of findings such as this, solarization of a patron god, Smith claims that the monarchy's status was strengthened due to its shared solar affiliation.⁴⁶⁴ This is particularly interesting when regarding the royally significant passages (see 2 Sam 23:3-4 above, chapter 2.b.i) that bears on the same solar imagery. Though distant geographically, we should here again consider the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscription that epigraphically purports a solar El (see chapter 3.b.ii). This is not to mention, of course, the passages above that link this divine name to solar attributes (see Pss 19:2-7 and 50:1-6 above, chapter 3.b.i). These, and the fact that

⁴⁵⁹ del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 53.

⁴⁶⁰ Smith and Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle. Volume II*, 346.

⁴⁶¹ del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 71.

⁴⁶² Smith, "The Near Eastern Background," 38; cf. Mark S. Smith, "Yahweh and Other Deities in Ancient Israel: Observations on Old Problems and Recent Trends" in *Ein Gott allein?: JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (ed. Walter Dietrich and Martin A. Klopfenstein; OBO 139; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 197-234, 212f.

⁴⁶³ Smith, "The Near Eastern Background," 38; See *ANEP*, 168 (493, 826).

⁴⁶⁴ Smith, "The Near Eastern Background," 38.

the name El is shared by Canaanite and Israelite religion, might point to a possible entrance point for solar characteristics into Israelite tradition. Unfortunately we know too little of how or to what degree the two peoples were separated at the different junctures. What we do know, is that the name El was legitimate, but Ba'al was not.⁴⁶⁵

Phoenicia

The somewhat elusive area of Phoenicia was made up of an array of city-states on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean.⁴⁶⁶ Additionally there were outposts and colonies like the famous Carthage, far beyond the conventional "borders" of Phoenicia. Of important cities we may mention Sidon, Tyre, Arwad and Byblos.⁴⁶⁷ The Phoenician city-states had their origin in ancient times, but were probably significant from the 12th century BCE and until the conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BCE.⁴⁶⁸ Not very many coherent texts survive to tell us of very much of their beliefs;⁴⁶⁹ our understanding of the religion of this area is quite scarce.

In this area the designation *šmš* occur, and as elsewhere it both connotes the the solar deity and the common noun for "sun".⁴⁷⁰ The form is in only slight contrast to the Ugaritic, feminine *špš* treated above. A witness to the common noun may be found on the Sidonian temple of Eshmun, where several terrors are to befall the prospective blasphemer among "the living under the sun".⁴⁷¹ Additionally, Heliopolis is called *qrt šmš* in a Phoenician inscription in Egypt.⁴⁷²

Regarding the divine sun, we may not have very many native sources from this area. Epigraphy reveals similarities to Ugarit as the eternal and omnipresent quality of the sun is emphasized. There is also an example from the above-mentioned Amarna letters, wherein the king of Tyre appeals to Akhenaten as "eternal sun".⁴⁷³ One other ambiguous inscription in Punic give witness to a correlation or

⁴⁶⁵ Unfortunately, further discussion does not belong here. For more on the connection between YHWH and El, I recommend the exiting discussion in Smith, "Yahweh and Other Deities," 206-214.

⁴⁶⁶ Edward Lipiński, "Phönizien," *RGG* 6:1319-1322 (1319).

⁴⁶⁷ Lipiński, *RGG* 6:1320.

⁴⁶⁸ Lipiński, *RGG* 6:1320f.

⁴⁶⁹ Briel-Chatonnet, *Les Relations*, 6f, 15; Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:404f, sets the number of inscriptions to about 30.

⁴⁷⁰ Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire." 97f.

⁴⁷¹ Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire." 97.

⁴⁷² Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire." 98.

⁴⁷³ Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire." 98, cf. William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, Md: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 241f (EA 155).

some kind of confluence with the other deities Ba'al and Sakon, but it remains unclear what is brought across here.⁴⁷⁴ However, there can be no doubt that Egypt has played a major role in the influence of Phoenician culture and religion, particularly from the iconography (see part b below).⁴⁷⁵ The name Shamash, however, is of Semitic origin, and likely it may be easier to speak of a composite image of various solar traditions of Mesopotamia and the local surroundings.⁴⁷⁶ This area is of particular interest to us in this dissertation, being one of the closest in proximity and temporality to HB times, and it is sad to admit our lack of sources. Bonnet marks the many possibilities of influence that may have come from anywhere in this area by Arab, Syrian or Greek inspiration, not to mention the innumerable solar cults and the other deities which acquired solar abilities (Hadad, Ba'al-Shamem, Zeus/Jupiter etc.).⁴⁷⁷ Additionally, also in this area the solar character points toward a protector of justice.⁴⁷⁸ Bonnet concludes that the Phoenician sun cult has clear Egyptian traits, but that other modalities are of clear Syro-Mesopotamian origin.⁴⁷⁹ It is unfortunate that we cannot get any closer to a concretely Phoenician sun deity, but in seeing the contours of many others, we are no less positive that the common traits of the Near East were present also here.

Lastly, we should mention the questionable stance of Morgenstern, who claims that Melqart was the Tyrian sun god, "identical in all essential details" with the Babylonian "one single god of the sun", Marduk (see above).⁴⁸⁰ Even though the statement that Marduk was the only solar deity of Babylon is preposterous, his other claims are interesting if approached with caution. He links the festival of Heracles to the Tyrian king Hiram (Josephus: "Ἡρώμωος"),⁴⁸¹ where this king enacts the role of the "local Heracles", Melqart-Baal Shamem.⁴⁸² Enthroned in the temple at the two equinoxes, he let the sun shine on him to appear as the sun, and Morgenstern links this act to the execration of Tyre in Ezek 28, with particular emphasis on vv6f.⁴⁸³ If this is correct, then we have a very interesting link between kingship, the royal

⁴⁷⁴ Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire," 101.

⁴⁷⁵ Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire," 105f.

⁴⁷⁶ Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire," 106.

⁴⁷⁷ Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire," 105.

⁴⁷⁸ Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire," 107.

⁴⁷⁹ Bonnet, "Le Dieu Solaire," 108.

⁴⁸⁰ Morgenstern, "The King-God," 150.

⁴⁸¹ In this Morgenstern references Josephus, *Ant.* 8.5.3.

⁴⁸² Morgenstern, "The King-God", 153 (note in particular Ezek 28:7 "יִפְעֹתָךְ" = "shining", the cognate verb יָפַע always concerns YHWH).

⁴⁸³ Morgenstern, "The King-God", 152-4.

connection to the sun and a solar deity. Morgenstern's approach, however, has too many gaps and shortcuts, and his premises are somewhat flawed. As Smith comments in the Ugaritic case, we may assume that also in the Phoenician city-states the patron gods took on solar characteristics to enhance the status of the monarchy which bore the same affiliations (see above).

The Hebrew Bible attests in a variety of sources to the existence and prominence of the Phoenician civilization. The Phoenicians are known through their widespread commerce and culture spread from their city-states on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Prominent cities included Sidon, Byblos, Sarepta,⁴⁸⁴ Beirut, Arvad and in particular Tyre.⁴⁸⁵ The Biblical account of Josh 19:24-31, probably dating to a late, priestly source,⁴⁸⁶ claims important Phoenician areas inside the supposed area of the tribe of Asher.⁴⁸⁷ Other important links between the histories of the peoples are made: Hiram's massive donation of Lebanese cypress to Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 5:15-25), and Hiram the bronze worker's decoration the temple interior (1 Kgs 7:13-45). To such a strict society as the monolatrous Israelites, it is surprising to hear that a foreigner would do his artwork in their holiest of places. This is not to mention the massive breach of the aniconic legislation of the Pentateuch. There is all good reason to believe that strong connections were made with the very apt Phoenicians in these days. On the more negative descriptions of 1 Kgs must be mentioned the intrigues of the Sidonian Jezebel, made responsible for Baal worship (1 Kgs 16:31-33), the massacre of Yahwistic prophets (18:4) and the murder of Naboth (21:1-16). With the extreme level of communication that occurred between these states, there is a high probability of solar religious influence. The case of Jezebel, how negatively portrayed it may be, is direct attestation of imposition of foreign cult into Northern Israel. I believe no further justification is needed to demonstrate a *probability* of Phoenician influence.

iv. Hittite Anatolia

As our penultimate inquiry into the neighboring systems of belief we will take a look at

⁴⁸⁴ Covered in 1 Kgs 17:7-24 is the account of Elijah and the widow of Sarepta.

⁴⁸⁵ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:403.

⁴⁸⁶ Edward Lipiński, "The Territory of Tyre and the Tribe of Asher" in *Phoenicia and the Bible* (ed. Edward Lipiński; OLA 44. SP XI. Leuven: Peeters, 1991), 153-166. 153.

⁴⁸⁷ Edward Lipiński, "Introduction: La Phénicie et la Bible" in *Phoenicia and the Bible* (ed. Edward Lipiński; OLA 44. SP XI. Leuven: Peeters, 1991), 1-9. 1.

the solar deity known to us through the Hittite king Mursili II (1330-1295 BCE)⁴⁸⁸, among others. His prayers to the sun goddess of Arinna as head of the Hittite pantheon are decent evidence of her veneration in Hittite Anatolia.⁴⁸⁹ The goddess remains nameless to us, but unsurprisingly the prayers of the king appeal to her righteous nature. She is called a righteous judge, she is responsible for the boundaries of nations, legitimate kingship in heaven and earth, and she “never gets tired of passing judgment”.⁴⁹⁰ The many-faceted sun deity proves, like elsewhere, to be a chthonic one as well. In one of the early prayers of the Hittite tradition, where she is invoked to protect the king from slander, she is called “Sun-goddess of the Netherworld”.⁴⁹¹ Another early prayer attests to a male aspect of the sun as “son of Ningal”, a dependence on Babylonian religion the poem confirms with the other divine names.⁴⁹² Very interesting, however, are some lines translated by Ferdinand Sommer:

Sun God of Heaven, shepherd of man!
 You rise out of the sea, Sun of Heaven.
 Up to Heaven you move in your course.
 Sun God of Heaven, my Lord! To children of men,
 To dogs, to swine, to the wild beasts of the field,
 You give justice, O divine Sun, day after day!”⁴⁹³

This hymn exemplifies many of the commonalities represented by sun worship in the ancient Near East. The solar deity is appealed to as a “shepherd of man”, an image commonly applied e.g. in Mesopotamia,⁴⁹⁴ and famously describing YHWH in the HB.⁴⁹⁵ Moving on to reference of its course across heaven it is not praised for its solar applications, but rather its “justice”. As such this hymn catches the very essence of Near Eastern solar worship, and is a near perfect example of the correlation between the purely physical life-giving solar attributes and the

⁴⁸⁸ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:230.

⁴⁸⁹ “Plague Prayers of Mursili II,” translated by Gary Beckman (COS 1.60:56-159); Itamar Singer, *Hittite Prayers* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 49-54, 56f, 73.

⁴⁹⁰ Bjarte Kaldhol, *Hettittiske Skrifter* (Oslo: Bokklubben, 2009), 185.

⁴⁹¹ Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 21f.

⁴⁹² Kaldhol, *Hettittiske Skrifter*, 222.

⁴⁹³ C. W. Ceram, *The Secret of the Hittites: The Discovery of an Ancient Empire* (London: Phoenix Press, 1955), 92.

⁴⁹⁴ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:595.

⁴⁹⁵ Gen 48:15; Isa 40:11; Pss 23:1; 78:52; 80:2.

metaphysical ethical role of righteousness embodied.

The function of the ruling king as religious mediator very likely presents itself also in the Hittite religion. This may be deduced from the lack of personal prayers of commoners in ancient Anatolia.⁴⁹⁶ At least the king in various texts is called “Priest of the Sun-goddess of Arinna”, and certainly resembles Egyptian, Judean and Semitic tradition of royal priesthood. In cases of conflict between king and deity a tribunal is called for, and the interceding party pleading the case of the defendant is usually one of the solar deities.⁴⁹⁷ Suppiluliuma I (1370-1330 BCE)⁴⁹⁸ employs “Sun” as his very name and directly attributes it to his kingship.⁴⁹⁹ So, then, in his self-reference as “the sun” or “my sun” he is appealing to his own majesty as king of Hatti. Kuhrt sees this phrase as a “verbal echo” of the Hittite use of the sun disc, known to us through archeological findings.⁵⁰⁰

Though on some occasions a storm god is invoked, the solar deities prove to be the prime object of worship in pleading for goodwill. Singer underscores, as we have seen in the other ancient religions, the importance of the omnipresence of the sun to its juridical credibility. The solar deity defends all creatures (cf. the hymn above), and impartially supports the accused.⁵⁰¹ This tendency adds to our perception of the sun as the one righteous, divine intercessor of the ancient Near Eastern religions.

The Hittites are probably the hardest to directly associate with the HB sources. There have been no important points of contact between the Hittites and Israel, and the Hittite kingdom was nearly disintegrated when the Davidic era commenced. If any influence or sway were to occur between the two, mediators would be necessary. We know that their culture was more than in touch with Egypt through the Amarna letters, and of course the Phoenician city-states and Ugarit, with their geographical proximity and trade. Even if no direct links can be made, the Hittites are included here to show the obvious similarities that indeed had an impact on their contemporaries.

⁴⁹⁶ Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 7.

⁴⁹⁷ Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 8f.

⁴⁹⁸ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:252.

⁴⁹⁹ “Hittite Treaty,” translated by Albrecht Goetze (*ANET*, 529f).

⁵⁰⁰ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:277.

⁵⁰¹ Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 9.

v. Achaemenid Persia

The Persian rule under Cyrus the Great (559-530 BCE), relieving Nabonidus king of Babylon in 539,⁵⁰² had immense significance for the Israelites. The praise of Cyrus that is found in the HB recapitulates his edict,⁵⁰³ stating that the exiled are to return to their homes and rebuild the Jerusalem temple. One of the keywords of the dissertational thesis is the term “post-exilic”, a time designation made possible by the Achaemenids in replacing the Babylonian hegemony. Fittingly, then, we should also investigate whether (or *how*) the contemporary ANE could have influenced Judean prophecy.

The rise of Zoroastrianism and introduction of the chief deity Ahura Mazda is not as well documented as the historian would like. We do, however, know of the ancient religion from its practice in the Persian royal court. As everywhere else in the ANE, kingship was allotted the human subject on divine approval.⁵⁰⁴ The correlation between king and deity was not like the Egyptian counterpart; the king is an extraordinary person, albeit not divine nor endowed with such power.⁵⁰⁵ The chief deity and the god most closely associated with the king was Ahura Mazda, creator of the universe.⁵⁰⁶ Also in Persia the ideal of a righteous king persisted; the earthly rule was to mirror the divine, as the king was commissioned to uphold creation.⁵⁰⁷

The Persian solar deity in connection to kingship, however, is of a slightly more obscure character. Most of the sources available to us are Greek writers, and all the following have been made known to me by the excellent Briant and his volume cited above. References below are made to other translations of the texts.

Intriguingly, Plutarch (1st-2nd century BCE) recounts a conversation between Darius III and his chamberlain: “For neither did...thy mother or thy children, lack any of their former great blessings except the light of thy countenance, which Lord Oromazdes will cause to shine again with lustre...”.⁵⁰⁸ Here Ahura Mazda, shining himself, is the direct cause of the “light of thy countenance”, that is Darius III. This is slightly reminiscent of Ps 80:4,12,20 which correlates the saving action of YHWH with

⁵⁰² Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 2:573.

⁵⁰³ Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5; 2 Chr 36:23.

⁵⁰⁴ Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander* (trans. Peter T. Daniels; Winona Lake, In.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 240f, 248.

⁵⁰⁵ Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 240f; Amélie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire* (London: Routledge, 2007), 473.

⁵⁰⁶ Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 474.

⁵⁰⁷ Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 473.

⁵⁰⁸ Plutarch, *Alex.* XXX.5 (from the collection *Lives*; Trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL).

the shining of his face.⁵⁰⁹ Further we may comment on the same author's report of Artaxerxes II's response to his son Darius' plot to kill him. After executing him by scimitar, "...going forth into court, he made obeisance to the sun and said: "Depart in joy and peace, ye Persians, and say to all whom ye meet that those who contrived impious and unlawful things have been punished by great Oromasdes.""⁵¹⁰ These two accounts, and the latter in particular, associate Ahura Mazda directly with the sun. He is by no means a sun god *per se*, but seems here to take on solar abilities. The case of Artaxerxes even strongly supports the notion of the sun as dealing with righteousness. The lack of other such instances or mentions of solar righteousness makes the concept hard to establish. Seeing how strongly the neighboring and preceding Mesopotamian culture associated the sun god with righteousness, however, it seems foolish to doubt the correlation.

Ahura Mazda is, however, relatively infrequently referred to. Later Roman and Greek tradition would rather import the deity Mithra in its (solar) cult mysteries,⁵¹¹ and Strabo (1st century BCE – 1st century CE) links this god directly to the sun.⁵¹² A very intriguing connection is made between Mithra and horses, as they on occasion were sacrificed to him.⁵¹³⁵¹⁴ This fact brings to mind the similarity to the passage of 2 Kgs 23:11, speaking of horses "dedicated to the sun". Perhaps Strabo and Xenophon (5th-4th century BCE), and the latter in particular, knew of a tradition specific to this area? Additionally the "righteous" character of Mithra is well documented in its "just dealing" as "guardian of oaths".⁵¹⁵ Mithra's very old tradition from the Rigveda indeed calls him "judge", "*rajan*", often wrongly translated "king", its secondary meaning.⁵¹⁶ The Mithra of the Zoroastrian Avesta is portrayed as the sun crossing the sky, tirelessly hunting down covenant breakers.⁵¹⁷ As such it resembles the divine warrior of the HB, but mostly, rather than promoting righteousness the Avestan Mithra militates against evil. Malandra suggests: "Mithra's acquisition of martial traits can just as well

⁵⁰⁹ Not to mention, of course, the middle part of the Aaronic Blessing in Num 6:25.

⁵¹⁰ Plutarch, *Art. XXIX.7* (from the collection *Lives*; trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL).

⁵¹¹ Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 251

⁵¹² Strabo, *Geogr.* 15.3.13 (trans. Horace Leonard Jones, LCL): "...δε και Ἥλιον ὃν καλοῦσι Μιθρην".

⁵¹³ Strabo, *Geogr.* 11.14.9; cf. the following, where horses are sacrificed to the sun god: Xenophon, *Cyr.* VIII.iii.12 (trans. Walter Miller, LCL); Xenophon, *Anabasis*, IV.v.24,35 (transl. Carleton L. Brownson, rev. John Dillery, LCL).

⁵¹⁴ The Avesta even speaks of Mithra as *in front of* the "swift-horsed sun": "*Yasht* 10.IV" translated by Malandra, *Introduction*, 60.

⁵¹⁵ Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 252; Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 475.

⁵¹⁶ Malandra, *Introduction*, 56.

⁵¹⁷ See particularly "*Yasht* 10 X, XI, XXVII" translated by Malandra, *Introduction*, 71.

have arisen out of his need to be able to enforce his judgments.”⁵¹⁸ Such an argument might very well fit the violent theophanies of the HB as well, particularly with Zephanian prophecy and Mal 3:19f in mind.

There is no doubt that both Ahura Mazda and Mithra were associated with the sun, but in Achaemenid times the latter unquestionably more than the former. As we have seen earlier with Ashur and Marduk, the chief deity does not hesitate to take on the abilities of other deities. It seems, however, that Mithra in particular, both in Greek and Avestan sources, prevails as the solar deity. The traits are exceedingly similar to those we already have seen in ANE religion. Most intriguingly, they seem to confirm the HB and general ANE image of solar righteousness, though it needs be said that the cultural points of contact at this juncture are of a diverging character. The Persian or Iranian culture(s) has many differences with the Semitic peoples, the language being one of the most important. As part of different language families and other alienating factors, perhaps influence was harder to achieve. However, as the Achaemenid Empire under Cyrus the Great saw the vastness of no other empire before it, there can be no doubt that Persian culture was made known in the entire Near East and beyond. It is more than conceivable, then, that many of its facets were gladly adopted in the Semitic world. An incredible incentive to such approval may be exemplified by our very context with the release of the exiled Israelites. HB tradition even designates Cyrus, a foreign emperor, as Messiah (משיח). Such endorsement cannot go unheeded by. In light of this, and the recordings of Ezra and even the Book of Esther, we may safely assert that favorable relations were made in the time of the Achaemenid Empire. Influence from the Persian religious or royal iconography (see part b below) may very well have served as a background for solar disposition of certain HB passages.

vi. Summary: An examination of the ancient Near Eastern cultures

The many HB uses of words for “sun” attest to at least one well-known idiom that has survived through translation and adaptation into many languages. The idiom is that most famously employed (26 times) in Ecclesiastes: “...under the sun” (תחת השמש). This phrase, standing alone, suggests simply any incident occurring on earth. Usage

⁵¹⁸ Malandra, *Introduction*, 57

such as this may point to a use of the solar image as that of omnipresence. Mal 1:11, Ps 50:1 and similar passages attest to the same. "From the sunrise to the setting" came to mean "everywhere", while the idiom of Ecclesiastes as it is used seems like "anywhere".

A striking correspondence between the various sun deities of the ANE is the "obvious subtleties" of their omnipresence. Ancient Ugaritic literature reveals to us that the sun was viewed as conveyor of truth, offering information unknown to the subject. In the Sumerian and Hittite cases, and also in the beautiful Assyrian Shamash hymn, the solar deity acts as judge and protector of those unable to protect themselves. As the best example, and with the most literature available to us on the subject, the Egyptians saw the sun as the righteous creating force which all law and order on earth was inspired by. Even kingship was attributed to a heavenly, solar ideal. The sun seems in almost every case to be omniscient. Even if the sun rays does not reach everywhere, its presence in the netherworld at night makes room for an understanding of the sun as a part of creation that is uninhibited by the laws of nature, by coincidence and whim. Its daily voyage across the sky; its unflinching route of dawning, climbing and setting; its awesome and uncontainable power are all aspects of its being that represent the steadfastness of the sun. Perhaps, then, this is a conceivable background for a connection between the sun, kingship and the concept of righteousness. Impartial sunrays bring on the notion of healing, even if this is not as outspoken as in the HB. When the subject cries out to the solar deity, righteousness is expected to prevail.

This "concept of righteousness" in itself has proven to be an elusive one, as different cultures perhaps disagree on its nature. To exemplify: It may be that, in the case of the orphaned girl of the Sumerian accounts, we too hastily anticipate the action of Utu as one of righteousness. Perhaps the notion is simply one of a "kind" sun, or that the sun takes special pity on certain subjects. Perhaps this act is considered as 'unfair' as anything? Surely an act of pity and an act of righteousness are two different things? The ancient Persians viewed Mithra as the sun who eagerly hunted down covenant breakers, and was as a *Divine Warrior*-like protector of righteousness. Utu and Mithra's diverging view of righteousness (note: in these isolated cases) are both brilliant examples of a broad and philosophical concept that is not easily grasped by people. Humans constantly seek righteousness for themselves, but everyone learn that what gains one person might destroy another.

As such the very fitting image of the steadfast, impartial sun might have eased the problematic concept that few human subjects could live up to consistently.

The link to kingship was also made in the ancient Near East, as very often, the king functioned as priest to the solar deity. This was the case in Egypt, in Sumer, in Hittite Anatolia and perhaps in some Phoenician city-states where Baal-Shamem or El took on solar features. As we have seen from royally charged verses such as 2 Sam 23:3-4 and Ps 72:1-7, and maybe hinted at in Mal 3:20, kingship is tightly connected to the divinely commissioned righteousness carrying solar imagery. The solar imagery of the HB effectively ties the Israelite monarchy to a similar tradition. Even if the king did not serve a solar YHWH, there are so many points of contact with the other peoples of the ANE that it would be foolish to dismiss these particular correlations.

I have no doubt that we may make out a red thread throughout the traditions of the ancient Near East: The sun is omnipresent, and it is omniscient. In the Egyptian case, the solar deity is even the creating force, and thereby omnipotent as well. The sun is a force of nature so primal, so crucial to the existence of all life that ancient religion offers no option but dedication and veneration of the solar disc, provider of righteousness for all. The concept of *creatio continua*, evident also from HB passages such as Ps 104, is present everywhere we see prayers to or appropriations of the solar qualities invoked as a sustaining force. The inclusion of the most ancient of written sources from both Sumeria and Egypt has been fruitful in seeing the convergence and similarity of themes in all the empires to come, including the Israelite kingdom. Perhaps it is foolish to look for an "entry point" of solar imagery into Hebrew biblical theology. When seeing how far back these notions go, one is inclined to believe there is nothing nationally specific to it, but simply a theme that has persisted for at least two and a half millennia in the area. And to be fair, the kingdom of Israel did not even see half of that time as an established nation. Rather, the obscure pre-settled past of the Israelite tribes suggest that ideas might have been appropriated along the way. Here we are dealing with a narrative that starts out in Mesopotamia, makes the patriarchal wandering from Ur and up to Syria and even to the southeastern Anatolia, continues southward through Phoenician areas and into the land of Canaan. Further on, in Egypt and the exodus narrative the contours of a people start to show. Soon, Canaan is taken; a kingdom is established and reaches its political height during David and Solomon. I do not intend for this to be a

tendentious display of the selected empires above. I am simply stating that there is a narrative that only reveal parts of the Israelite prehistory, and that we cannot treat the question of an “entry point” as if the Israelite people suddenly rose from a Yahwistic, isolationist, nomadic vacuum. The examination of the cultures above makes it quite obvious that Israel was not alone with its solar imagery, its connection to righteousness and the monarchy, and certainly not its appropriation by various gods and goddesses. This will also be made clear in the following subchapter.

3.b. Evidence from archaeology in ancient Israel

i. The winged sun disk and its background

When dealing with issues such as archaeology, one needs to be aware that complete certainty in age or authenticity can, regrettably, never be attained. Countless pieces of broken pottery (ostraca) or inscriptions on walls or tablets have survived the millennia, most often under many layers of dirt. Unfortunately, often they have no other voice than what is written on them.⁵¹⁹ The risk of counterfeit artifacts or simply misdated objects is always present. In concert with my conclusions in the analysis text of Malachi, this subchapter presupposes the Near Eastern sun disk as a very plausible background for the description given in Mal 3:20. In these paragraphs I will endeavor to convey some of its history and significance that is relevant to the discussion of the origin of this imagery. My hope is that earlier use of the imagery in the Near East could shed light on its meaning when employed in ancient Israel and Judah. How was it appropriate that the winged sun disk, laden by nearly two millennia of tradition, was used in referencing YHWH? Here I deliberately use the term “winged sun disk”, as there are other types of winged disks.⁵²⁰

As one of the more important pieces of iconography the solar disc in its many varieties has manifested in all parts of the ancient Near East. The symbol has been employed in all the regions treated above, although with some differences.⁵²¹ Its

⁵¹⁹ That is, of course, disregarding the possibility that the clay, tools or script, etc. identify the origin.

⁵²⁰ Tallay Ornan has brilliantly pointed out that many variations indeed point to lunar iconography: Tallay Ornan, “A Complex System of Religious Symbols: The Case of the Winged Disc in Near Eastern Imagery of the First Millennium BCE,” in *Crafts and Images in Contact: Studies on Eastern Mediterranean Art of the First Millennium BCE* (ed. Claudia E. Suter and Christoph Uehlinger; OBO 210; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005) 207-241. 221(ff) (see the *brkhdd* inscription, Fig 15).

⁵²¹ Ornan, “A Complex System,” 232-234.

origin, however, may be found in Egypt,⁵²² as early as the fourth dynasty (2613-2494 (2575-2465) BCE)^{523, 524} Syrian and Canaanite adoption of the emblem is attested in the 18th century BCE.⁵²⁵ There is little doubt about the Egyptian heritage of the winged disc.⁵²⁶ The older south Mesopotamian solar emblems are commonly wingless, adorned with curvy lines emanating in four directions from its centre.⁵²⁷ According to Ornan this is a trait developed in the Third Ur Dynasty (2112-2004 BCE)^{528, 529} far removed from the Egyptian sources in time and distance. The winged disk is also a prominent symbol of ancient Persia, called the *Faravahar*, and needs some comment. As Briant observes, the figure frequently portrayed inside the disk is often thought to be the creator deity Ahura Mazda (see above on Persia), but on this there is much disagreement.⁵³⁰ Interestingly, its appearance often emulates the king's both in hand gesture and facial expression,⁵³¹ and this might be symbolic for the monarchic mirroring of the divine, which we have seen in both Mesopotamia and Egypt. Unfortunately, too much remains uncertain regarding the Faravahar,⁵³² and we will simply restrict ourselves to see the Persian iconography as part of a common tradition.

Symbolically, the wings themselves underscore the celestial aspect of what is being portrayed, and also invoke the idea of protection.⁵³³ Both of these ideas are found in the Biblical portrayal of the cherubim set on either side of the Ark of the Covenant; both of which are described as having a tremendous wingspan.⁵³⁴ Mayer-Opificius maintains that originally, the winged disc in Syria predominantly represented

⁵²² LeMon, *Yahweh's Winged Form*, 50.

⁵²³ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:136.

⁵²⁴ Dominique Parayre, "Les cachets ouest-sémitiques à travers l'image du disque solaire ailé (perspective iconographique)," *Syria* 67 (1990): 269-301. 270.

⁵²⁵ Ornan, "A Complex System", 208; Parayre, "Les cachets", 269.

⁵²⁶ I have, however, difficulty going along with Taylor's very specific proposal that the winged sun disk from the *Imlk* seals (see below) is a Judean representation of "Horus of Behdet": Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 48f.

⁵²⁷ Ornan, "A Complex System," 208.

⁵²⁸ Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:56.

⁵²⁹ Ornan, "A Complex System," 217; Cf. David, *The Cult of the Sun*, 20f, who believes that Mesopotamian influence on Egyptian art has occurred elsewhere.

⁵³⁰ Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 248, cf. also Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 556; Mary Boyce, "Fravaši," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, n.p. (cited 15. Aug. 2011). Online: <http://www.iranica.com/articles/fravasi-> (cf. the discussion of the king's *fravashi*, a kind of soul or spirit of the individual, similar to the Egyptian concept of a person's *ba*).

⁵³¹ Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 556.

⁵³² Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 248, cf. also Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire*, 556.

⁵³³ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 251.

⁵³⁴ 1 Kgs 6:23-30; Cf. also the image of the eagle's wings in Exod 19:4; Deut 32:11; also sim.: Pss 17:8; 36:8; 91:4 etc.

the sky in general.⁵³⁵ Ornan continues in arguing that the disc could signify other meteorological phenomena, like rain.⁵³⁶ This adds up with the traditional characteristic of the Near Eastern solar deity as a god of righteousness, bringing both sun and rain undeservedly to the earthly subject. This is very much in concord with the general image of the deity of the Hebrew Bible.⁵³⁷ Both Assyrian and Egyptian art is known to employ winged creatures as protective forces or genii, often in connection to royalty.⁵³⁸ Other winged creatures, such as scarabs and *uraei* are frequently found in ancient Israel.⁵³⁹ As was seen in the analysis of Mal 3:20, the Psalmic rendering of YHWH's wings are always connected to the sense of protection. See below for more confirmation on this in examples of solar iconography attested in Israelite iconography.

The use of the disc is, seemingly, of varied intention, making it difficult to be very definite about its symbolism. There are examples of royal or official use, while in other cases there is simply reference to the common or divine sun. Ornan, in accordance with Mayer-Opificius,⁵⁴⁰ disqualifies the necessity of royal associations in Western Asian imagery (apart from Egypt and Anatolia) in her thorough article where she argues that very few cases of a winged sun disk are definitely attributed to statehood or official court.⁵⁴¹ Rather, it is argued that the emblem generally conveys attribution to a deity.⁵⁴² To be sure, syncretism was widely practiced in this area, but in accordance with Tigay's onomastic analysis of the eight century BCE and on,⁵⁴³ Keel and Uehlinger are positive that YHWH was the dominant deity of ancient Northern Israel.⁵⁴⁴ Ornan believes accordingly that in the Israelite areas that the superior deity indeed was YHWH, as archaeology seems to confirm his superior influence over the area.⁵⁴⁵

An example of a recovered sun disk is a Samarian piece of ivory, displaying a falcon with a solar disk on its head, kneeling before the "sun child" (a representation

⁵³⁵ Ruth Mayer-Opificius, "Die Geflügelte Sonne: Himmels- und Regendarstellungen im Alten Vorderasien," *UF* 16 (1984): 189-236 (192).

⁵³⁶ Ornan, "A Complex System," 209.

⁵³⁷ cf. Lev 26:4f; Deut 11:14; Isa 30:23; 45:7f; Jer 5:24; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23f; Ps 65:10-13 etc.

⁵³⁸ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 256.

⁵³⁹ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 251f.

⁵⁴⁰ Mayer-Opificius, "Die Geflügelte Sonne," 190.

⁵⁴¹ Ornan, "A Complex System," 210.

⁵⁴² Ornan, "A Complex System," 210.

⁵⁴³ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (HSS 31; Scholars Press: Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1986), 37-41.

⁵⁴⁴ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 261; cf. the agreeing Ornan, "A Complex System," 232.

⁵⁴⁵ Ornan, "A Complex System," 232.

of the Egyptian solar deity) and presenting an image of Ma'at ("what is right", see ch. 3.a.i).⁵⁴⁶ This very small piece of iconographic rendition is densely packed with symbolism, and betrays a close relation to Egypt and its pantheon. Similar motifs occur in name seals with Hebrew origin, among them a much-discussed, famous one stating "byw bd 'zyw", perhaps referring to a servant of Uzziah.⁵⁴⁷ That the seal is relevant to us is obvious from the theophoric element pointing to YHWH. Findings of the winged sun disk on seals are less commonly attested to in Judah than in Northern Israel, such as this.⁵⁴⁸ The correlation of a sun deity and the Egyptian correspondent to righteousness on a Hebrew name seal at least confirms that such disposition was alive in the Samarian Iron Age IIB (abt. 925-825 BCE).⁵⁴⁹ It should be mentioned that although Egyptian-influenced motifs occur more than frequently, anthropomorphic renditions like goddesses or the sun-child or are rare.⁵⁵⁰

Of the most important of sun disk findings, we have the jar handles of Lachish, dated to the reign of Hezekiah.⁵⁵¹ Of these over 1000 are found, on which the inscription *lmlk* is found combined with both winged sun disks and scarabs.⁵⁵² Conveying "to/for the king", the instant connection to the Egyptian relationship between the throne and the solar deity would naturally come to mind. It is perhaps fitting to mention Hezekiah's befriending attitude towards Egypt, implied in Isa 30:1-7 and 36:4-10.⁵⁵³ Though, as treated in chapter 3, the notion of kingship and deity is by no means restricted to Egypt. Even if the Samarian and Judean royal court utilized solar imagery as official symbolism, would this divinely commissioned monarchy's emblems qualify a solar rendering of YHWH? Admittedly, the connection is vague. Ancient Near Eastern texts and archaeological findings do apply solar qualities to both Marduk and Ashur.⁵⁵⁴ Yet Ornan argues that winged disk attributions to these deities in iconography as such would easily be made because of their status as heads of a particular pantheon.⁵⁵⁵ She maintains that the winged disk was such a

⁵⁴⁶ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 249..

⁵⁴⁷ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 249 (illus. 241b), 264.

⁵⁴⁸ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 276.

⁵⁴⁹ The spelling of the theophoric element point to Northern Israel, but the king is Judean. cf. Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 264.

⁵⁵⁰ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 260.

⁵⁵¹ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 43.

⁵⁵² Ornan, "A Complex System," 231; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 51; Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 274 (see illus. 275a-276c, p. 275).

⁵⁵³ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 272.

⁵⁵⁴ Ornan, "A Complex System," 210; *ANEP*, 180 (536).

⁵⁵⁵ Ornan, "A Complex System," 213f, 229.

prominent marker of “prestige” that it would easily be applied to a supreme deity instead of necessarily pointing to Shamash or attributing any solar capacities to other deities.⁵⁵⁶ In this she is supported by Smith,⁵⁵⁷ as mentioned above (see ch. 2.b.ii, Ezek 8:16), and she concludes her article by suggesting that the definitely non-royal symbolism of Assyrian divinities is the closest relation to the archeological variants of Judah.⁵⁵⁸ In my view we may be certain that the Judean appropriation is of royal character,⁵⁵⁹ and that such royal appropriation is a possible trait from Anatolian, Syro-Phoenician and Egyptian tradition.

There is no doubt that an Egyptian-influenced understanding of the solar deity was prevalent in Phoenician and Israelite culture, as may be seen on many artifacts found in Palestine. Supporting this fact, the Horus-eye is actually the most commonly employed motif in the Iron Age II period.⁵⁶⁰ As stated above, the winged sun disk found its way from Egypt to Syria no later than the 18th century BCE. As Keel and Uehlinger points out, there is no way that Israelites in this area a millennium later did not know the religion and symbolism of Egypt,⁵⁶¹ still culturally dominant in the area. We should, probably, follow Ornan in seeing here a Judean appropriation of stylistically Assyrian divine motifs, coupled with the royal attributions of the northern and western cultures. The winged disk was in use *everywhere* at this time, and just that fact might suffice to explain why the emblem was accepted in a Yahwistic society. Due to similarities with Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian art we might suspect that similarly, the Persians appropriated the emblem from their Mesopotamian imperial predecessors. Even if Persian influence is more than likely regarding the analysis texts, the archaeology presented here predates the Persian Empire by at least two centuries. It is here one is wise not to forget what Ornan rightly points out: The symbol had seen one thousand years of history already,⁵⁶² and probably lost its general meaning and succumbed to local adoption and degrees of recontextualization. From the evidence we cannot treat the winged sun disk as indicative of solar Yahwism even if the symbol points to YHWH.

⁵⁵⁶ Ornan, “A Complex System,” 213f, 218, 229.

⁵⁵⁷ Smith, “The Near Eastern Background,” 38f.

⁵⁵⁸ Ornan, “A Complex System,” 231, 233f; cf. the disagreeing Parayre, “Les cachets”, 293f (Parayre believes the symbol is royal also in Assyria, but we will not debate this further, as it is of minor value for the dissertation).

⁵⁵⁹ Ornan, “A Complex System,” 231, 233f;

⁵⁶⁰ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 258f.

⁵⁶¹ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 259.

⁵⁶² Ornan, “A Complex System,” 233; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 53.

ii. Other archaeological evidence from ancient Israel

In this part of the dissertation I will take a look at other items recovered that in some way pertain to the analysis texts' solar imagery of YHWH. This small subchapter will consider findings apart from the sun disk in the relevant areas, Israel and Judah. A significant geographical exception is Kuntillet 'Ajrud, which lies just outside the borders of ancient Judah on the Sinai Peninsula.⁵⁶³ The most important newer contribution to this field is the brilliant *Gods, Goddesses and images of God* by Keel and Uehlinger, already referenced amply above. To the best of my knowledge, no other publication offers such an extensive record of ancient Israelite art. As the reader will see, I am greatly indebted to this volume.

As has been shown by Keel and Uehlinger, the items recovered that are traced back to the area of the Northern Kingdom are often hard to separate from the Phoenician crafts.⁵⁶⁴ The most common traits of the Samarian artifacts are the absence of anthropomorphic goddesses and a proclivity to solar motifs.⁵⁶⁵ Such motifs often involve winged creatures: scarabs, uraei, falcons and sphinxes.⁵⁶⁶ There can be no doubt that these *protective* characteristics lean heavily on originally Egyptian culture and art,⁵⁶⁷ but elements from the east emerge, too.⁵⁶⁸ The three most important symbols to us are the four-winged scarab, the Horus-eye and the winged disk,⁵⁶⁹ all prominent solar symbols of the time. As has been explained earlier (see ch. 3.a.i), the four-winged scarab represents the rising sun, while the winged sun disk is a clear representation of the sun itself.⁵⁷⁰

Findings have revealed multiple-winged scarabs found particularly in Samaria, a typically Egyptian piece of art and a prominent solar symbol: The scarab was known to push a ball of dung before itself, and understood as imitating the daily solar journey.⁵⁷¹ It is hard to avoid an acknowledgement that the winged creatures effectively refer to the heavenly realm. It has been suggested that the four-winged

⁵⁶³ Bill T. Arnold, "Religion in Ancient Israel," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A survey of Contemporary Approaches* (ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 391-420 (413).

⁵⁶⁴ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 260.

⁵⁶⁵ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 260.

⁵⁶⁶ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 251.

⁵⁶⁷ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 249, 252.

⁵⁶⁸ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 262.

⁵⁶⁹ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 256f (brilliantly exemplified in illus. 255-259).

⁵⁷⁰ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 44 (this is not to say that the winged disk in all situations refer to the sun deity).

⁵⁷¹ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 256f; Quirke, *The Cult of Ra*, 25f.

scarab functioned as a royal symbol in Northern Israel, but due to scarcity of evidence this notion has varied support, and outright denied by Smith and Taylor.⁵⁷² Still, the symbol has been recovered in both the Northern Kingdom and in Judah, e.g. on the *Imlk* jar handles (see above).⁵⁷³ From Egypt we are certain that e.g. the sphinxes are “symbols of royal or courtly rule”,⁵⁷⁴ and similarly we may assume that the standards of winged sun disk and four-winged scarab were regal emblems of Judah. The official that might have served under Uzziah (see above) is a difficult source due to its time and ambiguous origin. The symbols found in Judah, however, strongly suggest inspiration from the Egyptian court in the 800s BCE and onward.⁵⁷⁵

Of particular interest to us are also the Egyptian-styled *uraeus* (see ch. 3.a.i) employed in Judah: A snake-creature portrayed on seals, meant to protect the owner whose name was imprinted on it.⁵⁷⁶ In Egyptian iconography, the *uraeus* is a fire breather, an image of the stinging heat of the peaking sun.⁵⁷⁷ Canaanite and Phoenician protective symbols of this kind are also attested to.⁵⁷⁸ Plausibly related to this common concept of protective serpent-creatures (genii of the court are known to inhabit shapes like this)⁵⁷⁹ are the seraphs of Isaiah 6:2 and the *Nehushtan*⁵⁸⁰ made by Moses.⁵⁸¹ A particularity is the *uraei* with four wings, which Keel and Uehlinger deem “a typical Judahite motif” at the end of the 8th century.⁵⁸² As the wings connote protection, the *uraei* on name seals function as safeguarding the name holder.⁵⁸³ Such a seal, possibly owned by an official of Ahaz (see “the chambers of Ahaz” above, in the walkthrough of 2 Kgs 23:4f, 11f), displays a crowned solar disk with a *uraeus* on either side.⁵⁸⁴ This could serve as circumstantial evidence of royal sun disks in Judah. Similar seals and the like are frequently found with images of falcons, goat-animals and lions, all of which were symbols known from the court of

⁵⁷² Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 256f; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 40-42, 45. Smith, “The Near Eastern Background,” 39.

⁵⁷³ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 41, 51.

⁵⁷⁴ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 262.

⁵⁷⁵ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 264, 266; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 52.

⁵⁷⁶ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 273; cf. also Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Press, 2001), 55; Ronald S. Hendel, “Serpent נחש,” *DDD* 744-747 (744f).

⁵⁷⁷ Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 52.

⁵⁷⁸ Ronald S. Hendel, “Nehushtan נחושתן,” *DDD* 615; Hendel, *DDD* 745.

⁵⁷⁹ Joines, Karen R., “The Bronze Serpent in the Israelite Cult” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87, 1968, 245-256 (246, 255).

⁵⁸⁰ Num 21:4-9: הנחשים השרפים (JPS: “seraph serpents”); 2 Kgs 18:4.

⁵⁸¹ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 273f.

⁵⁸² Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 273.

⁵⁸³ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 273.

⁵⁸⁴ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 272.

Pharaoh,⁵⁸⁵ but unfortunately it is hard to link anything particular to the court. On a side note, it is thought-provoking that the serpentine imagery can refer, on the one side, to deadly creatures and even the slithery manifestation of chaos (like Apophis)⁵⁸⁶, and on the other, to a protective creature that in some cases even *heals*.

Moreover, another seemingly important finding are the horse figurines with solar disks that have been discovered at various sites in Jerusalem, Lachish and Hazor.⁵⁸⁷ One of the key texts of ch. 2.b.ii, 2 Kgs 23:4f, 11f, specifically mentions horses dedicated to the sun. Moreover, a horse ornament in bronze with a winged solar disk was uncovered on Samos, and is epigraphically linked to Aram.⁵⁸⁸ Taylor additionally discusses Cypriote figurines, but reaches no satisfying result on the Greek connection.⁵⁸⁹ Naturally, there are speculations of whether archaeological findings such as these may shed some light on the mysterious horses. Taylor in his summing up argues quite satisfactorily that no positive link can be made between the figurines, the passage or even solar worship.⁵⁹⁰ The lack of both chariots and riders, in addition to insecurity of the disk-shapes leads him thither.⁵⁹¹ We will follow Taylor on this, but a keen eye on future findings should be had. See also above, in ch. 3.a.v, on the Persian connection between horse and sun deity.

An important parallel to be found outside the HB exists on a wall from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, where solar ability is given to the deity called El, like in e.g. Ps 50:1. Quite remarkably, it even employs זרה, the root we have seen in other passages (e.g. Deut 33:2 and 2 Sam 23:4), so that it resembles this one: "...El has shone forth".⁵⁹² Admittedly, it is אלהים with the verb יפע, and not אל with זרה that is employed here. Still a magnificent parallel may be traced in this context. As mentioned above, Smith contends the view that chief deities of this time were often appropriated solar imagery. This was a political move to link more closely the solar deity to the monarchy, thereby strengthening its position.⁵⁹³ As such this finding might be an extrabiblical attestation of the inclinations toward solar imagery.

Keel and Uehlinger go far in assuming a dependency on Egyptian royal motifs

⁵⁸⁵ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 268f.

⁵⁸⁶ Leach, *Guide to the Gods*, 141, 713.

⁵⁸⁷ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 58, 60-62.

⁵⁸⁸ Ornan, "A Complex System," 226 (Fig 22).

⁵⁸⁹ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 64-66.

⁵⁹⁰ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 63(-66).

⁵⁹¹ Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 63-65.

⁵⁹² Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 245.

⁵⁹³ Smith, "The Near Eastern Background", 38f.

in what they call a “new solar orientation within the Judahite symbol system”.⁵⁹⁴ A small group of bone seals with solar motifs provide the wish for *growth* of the king’s name, and also blessings upon the royal institution.⁵⁹⁵ This, according to Keel and Uehlinger, is a genuine trait of Egyptian royal ideology, and mentions Ps 72:17 as an example of Hebrew textual support.⁵⁹⁶ They also make the brilliant argument that the adoption and employment of royal symbolism from Egypt was not so great a problem as was the adoption of religious symbolism.⁵⁹⁷ As opposed to Samaria, it seems as if Judah had a quite conservative repertoire of crafts, and was not as easily influenced by foreign tradition in this respect.⁵⁹⁸ It follows from this that Syro-Phoenician influence, as witnessed in the Northern Kingdom, did not have the greater influence over Judah. If, however, the adopted royal symbolism continued to communicate solar connotations, then difficult questions arise in whether YHWH, as commissioner of the kingly office,⁵⁹⁹ took on solar connotations as well. Keel and Uehlinger suggest directly, on the basis of the solar disks and uraei found on the seals of Hezekiah, that a solar YHWH is portrayed, and “indirectly, that the Davidic Kingdom was being sanctioned by the sun god.”

iii. Onomastic attestation from archaeology

Names taken from ostraca, stelae, seals, walls and other archaeological artifacts have contributed much to the understanding of different cultures and societies. This is also the case with the excavations carried out in the areas of Israel and Judah. The most important records still are those of the Hebrew Bible. Yet the kinds found archaeologically seem to confirm some traits that otherwise could have betrayed us in Biblical subjectivity. As such the non-Biblical attestation is invaluable to the academic. There are different opinions on how much reliance can be made on the various meanings behind names. Yet, as Tigay notes in his *You Shall Have No Other Gods*, “in pre-exilic Israel most personal names were in Biblical Hebrew and could be understood by any Israelite”.⁶⁰⁰ It is reasonable to assume that one’s name became part of one’s identity and very often carried with it religious preference in the inclusion

⁵⁹⁴ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 272; cf. Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*, 52-55 who argues strongly for Egyptian divinities.

⁵⁹⁵ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 266f.

⁵⁹⁶ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 266.

⁵⁹⁷ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 272.

⁵⁹⁸ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 270, 272.

⁵⁹⁹ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 276.

⁶⁰⁰ Tigay, *You Shall Have*, 5.

of a theophoric element. Though names were given by parents or other authorities, we are given a direct line of view into the community from which the name and item stem.

A possible case may be found in the bulla found in Judah containing the presumably theophoric name Yehozerah (יהוזרה), whose son Mattan is the owner of the seal.⁶⁰¹ The shorter Zerah is also attested (See 1 Chr 5:32) for *Zerahiah*.⁶⁰² The very same name appears on a second seal, allegedly found in Hebron, as “Yehozerah son of Hilqiyahu”.⁶⁰³ Understanding, then, the non-theophoric element to be the verb זרה, the name in all probability reflects an understanding of YHWH “shining forth” or “dawning”, a verb I, due to its use, in the analyses have deemed to be one of particularly solar nature. Keel and Uehlinger even calls it a “metaphor of Yahweh as the sun god”, and links it to both Deut 33:2 and their treatment of the winged scarab or solar disk.⁶⁰⁴ See above, ch. 2.b.iii, for the case of Neriah, also found on a seal. In addition, an enigmatic case from Samaria points to the name *šwššr sr*.⁶⁰⁵ Very probably the theophoric element, written in Aramaic script, is a variation on Akkadian Shawash/Shamash (*šmš*). This man is thus very likely a non-national or immigrant of sorts, as his daughter's name is written in Hebrew and has a Yahwistic theophoric element.⁶⁰⁶ No elements of surprise, then, in this latter case of clear foreign influence.

iv. Summary on the archaeological evaluation

Solar motifs seem to have flooded the borders of ancient Israel over time, even though predominantly, these may have taken on royal symbolism. As exemplified also in iconography, then, the states of Samaria and Judah found themselves as part of the solar “shift” that occurred at this time, as proposed by Smith and others. This is further supported by some onomastic references, but unfortunately these are rare. As we established above, in broad terms the stylistic influence is Assyrian, and the royal influence is Egyptian (though often Phoenician-mediated) when regarding the

⁶⁰¹ Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae*, 81.

⁶⁰² Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae*, 57f.

⁶⁰³ Nahman Avigad, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (rev. Benjamin Sass; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1997), 172f.

⁶⁰⁴ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 277.

⁶⁰⁵ Tigay, *You Shall Have*, 68, 72.

⁶⁰⁶ Tigay, *You Shall Have*, 13.

appropriation of the winged sun disk. This do not seem too important, as the winged sun disk, already at least a millennia old, is found everywhere at this juncture. The other royal symbols found are definitely Egyptian in character. The Egypt-friendly Hezekiah and the many seals of his time attest to this exactly. It is, however, remarkable that their implementation even occurred. Royal or not, the symbols were highly charged and definitely known for their religious significance as well. For the one wishing to see a strict monotheism upheld in the Judean 8th-6th century, perhaps the Assyrian tendency of simply attributing the emblem to the highest deity will fit.

In light of the neighbors whom we know was intimately linked to Israel historically and proximally, and whom the mentioned Judean king even sought to befriend, it is hard to avoid the notion that the surge of imagery was stacked with divine connotations. The idea of solar-divinely commissioned kingship was, as seen, commonplace in the ANE. And, it seems, the sun was also part of Israelite monarchic symbolism. Our most significant indicia are those of solar seals with onomastica containing YHWH-theophory. To how great a degree this involved syncretism in Israel is hard to say. What we do know, is that while some passages condemn solar worship, others dare to use solar imagery in this regard exactly. It seems like a fine line between the two. Perhaps "the only safe solarism is a Yahwistic solarism"? If we believe Keel and Uehlinger, the archeological surveys attest to solar depictions of YHWH, and that this fact is the origin of the passages of the divinely appointed kingship. We have seen that these are packed with solar language, both alluding to king and deity.

3.c. Summary of chapter 3: A common theology

The ancient Near East, all the neighboring nations of ancient Israel, had their variant of solar imagery. It is simply stunning to see how the different cultures apparently share so much of a common background. On the one hand, as a student of biblical theology, it is stunning to see how influenced the HB is by all the different material that the ancient authors knowingly or inadvertently included in their writing. On the other hand, it is remarkable to see the efforts made to keep the Israelite society monolatrous and obedient to the one YHWH. Considering the alternatives of the world around, the henotheism of the Israelites is quite unique and strange. Still, a lot of imagery and cult specific language have seeped through even if the foreign deities

were prohibited. The appropriation of solar imagery for YHWH was apparently a part of Hezekiah's theology, and it seems as if this was not a problem in the following centuries either, well into the second temple period.

As ties between the sun and divine protection of the monarchy are obvious, they provide exceptional attestation of solar righteousness as a developing tendency that connects court, palace and temple. What in Babylon is a solar deity responsible for lawgiving has in Israelite/Judean prophecy become imagery of the administration of divine sanction. In the Codex Hammurabi above we see it even clearer as the solar deity delegate judicial responsibility on the righteous king. In the HB the solar elements are transferred to both king and deity, and in the post-exilic prophecy both solar deity and king is gone. Remaining is an all-encompassing YHWH. More on this now, in the final summary.

Chapter 4:

Conclusions: The relevance of solar imagery to Hebrew biblical theology

The investigation into the solar imagery of the post-exilic passages of Isaiah and Malachi feels a bit like opening the legendary Pandora's box. Immense proportions of literature are available on the subject of ancient Near Eastern religion, not to mention the broader aspects of culture, politics and sociology. In the introduction I spoke warmly of peering across the borders of theology into other scholarly branches. Even more so now, after such a rewarding study. In this endeavor I have not, however, left theology, as the main point of interest has been the investigation and significance of solar imagery as part of post-exilic prophecy.

We have seen in the much-commented passages of Isaiah and Malachi the contours of a deity that was portrayed with solar imagery. We have also seen that this is a trait that has developed in HB theology: From a Divine Warrior-kind of deity in charge of legislation (accompanied by more general theophanic language) to one that is honored by luminous characteristics and primarily interested in saving his covenant people. This salvific act, however, is dependent on the repentance of his adherents. In the circumstances of Isaiah 58, the demand is one of proper fast. In Malachi 3, it is one of fearing the name of YHWH. Both passages must be said to be deeply concerned with proper conduct of life. In Isaiah 60, when the climate between deity and men is better, the saving YHWH is underway, and his manner of coming is

a straightforward *dawning* over Zion. This dawning, nearing apocalyptic, must be seen as the coming of righteousness itself. The imagery nears completion when regarding Malachi 3: When the adherents of YHWH act according to his legislation, then he will come as the sun of righteousness, and he will heal his people.

From the outside, consulting the HB sources, one is presented a society that is *originally* religiously isolationist, but frequently its leaders trifle with the conservative ideals. We know that many kings of Israel and Judah (e.g. Solomon and Ahaz) dealt with foreign customs and intermarried with adherents to foreign cults. This is, of course, not taken lightly by the HB authors, and their actions are, by and large, condemned. This goes to show that no attempt is made to defend their actions, and thus underscores the importance of keeping the laws of YHWH. What then, about the passages that portray elements we conceive of as non-Yahwistic in a positive way? It seems to me that modern theologians of the Hebrew Bible often respond to scenarios like this in one out of two ways: 1) The given elements were originally Yahwistic. 2) The given elements were devoid of religious connotation and therefore acceptable. Both of these are “easy ways out”, but of course there are instances where they are correct. My point here is that, as suggested earlier, in many cases the solution is one of conscious assimilation or appropriation of other divinities' traits. We would then speak of a controlled syncretism bound for monolatry. Another possibility, which has been hinted at time and again, is a common ancient background that perhaps is non-specific to a certain culture. If there is one thing we have learned from ch. 3, it is that most of the cultures share a common background in viewing the sun as an omnipresent protector of righteousness. This is not to say that Israelite culture was uninhibited by its neighbors, but simply that solar proclivity and imagery was an *a priori* quality of this nation. Of course, to the same degree as it was to other nations, and that this theme by itself did not constitute idolatry. It was in the cases of Ezek 8 and 2 Kgs 21 and 23 that the line was crossed; the sanctity of the Jerusalem temple was breached with many kinds of alien, forbidden worship. Among these were solar *veneration*, a clear breach of Mosaic law.

It is particularly in relation to the passage in Malachi that the ancient Near Eastern neighboring cultures seemingly make a powerful impact on the Israelite culture. Even more so is the Hebrew biblical solar imagery that precede the post-exilic so alike the Egyptian, and the Mesopotamian, and the Persian in many ways. The winged sun disk has through its many centuries acquired many modes of

employment. First and foremost it has been a symbol of the heavenly realm, and came to be coupled with varying concepts of righteousness and legislation. The first grand collection of laws under the Babylonian Hammurabi is directly attributed to Shamash, as he presents it to the king. It may be here that the winged sun disk becomes a common symbol of the various monarchic institutions of the ANE. As some scholars have noted above, like Keel, Uehlinger and Smith, the turn of the first millennium BCE marked a shift in theopolitical circumstances. The grand deities of various pantheons, like Ashur, Marduk and Baal started appropriating solar imagery, and this served as an incentive to the monarchs that worshipped them to do the same. As the archeological survey has discovered, there is no doubt that Judean leadership invoked the very same insignia, and for all we know this was a continued practice since the times of David. The beautiful artifacts from the time of Hezekiah are good examples of this. There is, of course no doubt that foreign influence played a major part in the appropriation of solar imagery into insignia. This goes particularly for the time of this Hezekiah, and may be attributed to his Egyptian-friendly stance.

Something, however, seems to have happened in the exilic circumstances. As we saw in the analysis of Malachi 3:20, probably also reflected by its employment of the royal solar disk, it seems as if the royal imagery is not discontinued. In spite of the termination of the monarchy during the exile, it seems as if the royal imagery persists. This is also an era that canonizes and redacts biblical pericopae that is incredibly negative towards human kingship. Only a few kings, among them David, Solomon and Josiah, are commended as good "in the eyes of YHWH". This I take to show that YHWH has taken the place of the king, as is seen in many Psalms. As is shown in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the high priest had the most important office of the Hebrews. The highest human authority was the messiah, Cyrus the Great, enthroned in Pasargadae, far removed from the Israelites. Some have, as seen above, suggested that it is Cyrus whom the post-exilic authors have in mind when appropriating the royal imagery of sun and righteousness. Instead I choose to see the analysis texts as the culmination of a long tradition of theophany. YHWH is presented as soon to arrive, perhaps in a manner like in Zechariah 14:4-9: YHWH comes in the flesh, splitting the Mount of Olives in half, and there is continuous day (cf. Isa 60:19). It does not stop there either, as he is proclaimed king of the earth.

It is not of minor importance that solar imagery was appropriated by the Hebrew scholars and authors that wrote, assembled and canonized the scriptures

that came to be today's Hebrew biblical canon. This particular way of portraying YHWH is, by HB standards, the prime symbolism of *salvation*. The coming of YHWH, shrouded in light, his *glory*, signifies the very essence of late theophany in God's redeeming act. I believe that in the day and age of biblical authorship, the solar imagery was a powerful mode of linguistic device, from early on connected to violent theophanies. Time went by, and HB theology developed. The coming of YHWH was to a lesser degree as that of a Divine Warrior, but more in the mode of a savior, a king to rule his covenant people. As such the solar imagery may be seen as the prevailing kind of natural phenomena from the ancient theophanies. The development of the *glory* theology of the veiled YHWH revived the ancient views of the manner of God's movement, and solved the problem of human attendees by veiling the Almighty in a blinding light, reminiscent of the sun. The persisting solar imagery could continue to promise YHWH's divine help to the faithful adherent, and it was done in envisioning the dawning, radiant sun of righteousness above Zion.

5. Bibliography

Please note that some volumes are referenced to both in the primary and secondary literature. These works have as their primary objective to present translations of ancient texts, but do also offer significant secondary information I have made use of.

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